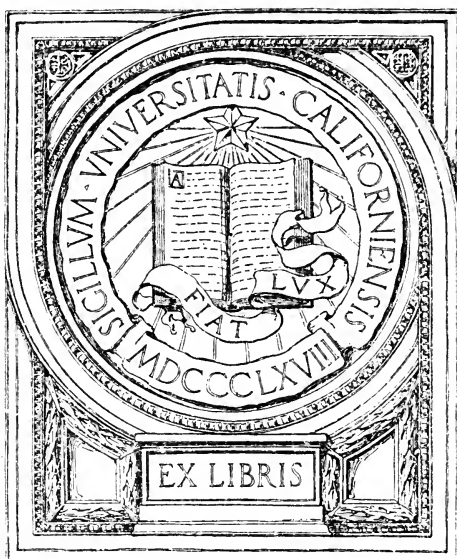


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# A Theory of the Genetic Basis of Appeal in Literature

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BY  
HOMER CLYDE HOUSE

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A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of The University of Nebraska  
in partial fulfillment of a requirement for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy.



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## INTRODUCTION

Possibly the most clearly distinguishing feature of the psychology of our time as compared with that of a generation ago is the relative by greater importance accorded the subject of psychic growth. The older psychology for the most part contented itself with defining a variety of terms which popular speech had already devised to name such different aspects of psychic life as the general consciousness recognized. The older texts go to great extremes in elaborating these subtle distinctions, many an exhaustive treatise or argument being spun, like the spider's web, out of the consciousness of the writer and applicable, if at all, only to creatures like himself, namely, the male members of cultured society.

But the old psychology, like the old botany and the old zoology, has given place to a science different from itself in motive and in scope. Cordially accepting the doctrine of evolution and its logical correlates, psychology has adopted the point of view characteristic of the biological sciences of today, and conceives the most vital fact of the universe to be, not that things *are*, but that they *become*.

Said Darwin\*—Man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his godlike intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system—with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.

With the thought of this statement as a text and charter the new science of mankind began to collect its materials and make its observations. And it was inevitable that the study of morphological forms, connecting man as a structural organism with the varying species of animal from the single-celled protozoan,

\* Conclusion of the *Descent of Man*.

should be supplemented by inquiry into the parallel phenomena of psychic development.

An incident of the new movement was the birth of what is called physiological psychology. As soon as it was realized that the evolution of mental power is coincident with the development of a complex nervous organism, the old grudging admission of a relationship between mental states and bodily conditions gave place to a hearty enthusiasm for the study of the nervous constitution of the human species.

To return, now, to the subject of evolution and the light it throws upon how man came to be what he is in bodily structure and how he came to move and think and feel as he does, there are a few great words that one hears frequently spoken in every discussion of this principle which gives a general name to all processes of growth in living organisms. These words are *heredity*, *variation*, *environment*, *ontogeny* and *selection*. The last of the five is to be the key note of the present study.

My theme, briefly, is this: The principle of *natural selection* as predetermining those reactions, commonly characterized as "emotional," which constitute the *interest* of literature.

*Natural selection* is what determines which species of living organisms, present among all those at a given time, and in a given environment, shall survive; and what characteristics of the species shall become enduring—in short, what shall be the line of development for a given group of animals or plants. For instance, in semi-aquatic regions, those birds to whom chance variation has given length of limb have a better chance of survival in the existing environmental conditions than their fellows, whom, ultimately, death removes. And the principle of *heredity*, or, namely, the tendency to repetition of the ancestral type, reinforced by the process of selection, will ultimately render length of limb a permanent characteristic of this type of birds.

This being granted, it is but a step to the conclusion that *mental as well as morphological characteristics are the result of a process of natural selection*. In all the vicissitudes of life upon the earth, those animals which develop the appropriate mental attitude toward every object of environment are the ones which survive. The emotion of fear (or at least the instinct to get away) is as essential to the survival of a frog in the presence of a snake as is the length of limb which gives him speed in making his escape. When any new and vital feature appears in the environment of a species of animal, be it a condition of atmosphere, an essential article of food, a poisonous herb, or a hostile form of animal life, those individuals which assume the appropriate instinctive attitude toward this friend or foe are the only ones doomed ultimately to live in its presence. And these instinctive reactions become fixed, in time, and in the case of the higher forms are merged into what we term *emotions*. A man's fear of snakes, therefore, is as much an inherited characteristic as the shape of his hand or the arch of his back; and his dread of the river at flood time is as valuable an inheritance from his ancestry as is the speed of limb which enables him to outrun his enemy.

*This, then, is the kernel of the present thought* in respect to the emotions and the emotional attitudes and expressions of man—that every emotional experience which we recognize as common to our species exists because at some time in race history it was a factor in survival, and may be still the occasion of reactions necessary to the continued life of mankind.

“Pleasure” or “enjoyment,” in the ordinary implication of these terms, can not, in this view, be the ultimate purpose of any conceivable activity. There is just one paramount interest, that has absorbed all the lesser ends and purposes of every race of creatures since the dawn of the world—namely, the purpose *to live*,—that is, in the technical language of the evolutionary sciences, *to survive*. . . *We think and feel that we may move; and we move that we may live.*

The application of this truth to the problem of literature is not far to seek. The interest, the emotional content, of every literary word or phrase or metaphor or theme is, at last, identical with the interest man has or has had in his own existence, and has grown up out of the keen experiences of those crucial moments of racial history when the facts now represented to us by language were forcing themselves, as agents of life and death, upon the consciousness of man. Take, say, half-a-dozen of the grand words of our language, words with which the poet can stir our profoundest sympathies or arouse us to the highest pitch of emotional excitement—for instance, the following list—*forest, blood, flame, home, lion, death*. Without stopping here to discuss in detail the origin of our inevitable reactions to any of the ideas named by the words of the list, the general purport should be evident at a glance. Fear of the lion, loyalty to home, mastery of flame, awe of death, love of the forest, have each been born at a crucial moment in racial history, when the appropriate reaction to the object or idea meant safety and perpetuity, and, conversely, the *inappropriate* activity, or indifference, meant retrogression and annihilation. And for each of these phenomena if we do not feel the enthusiasm of a present relationship, we do at least still feel a reverberation of the tremendous emotions with which they were once associated.

It is strictly legitimate for a reader to ask himself, when he finds himself smiling over pleasing images, charmed with rhythmic effects, thrilled by heroic deeds or absorbed in the unfolding of plot element:

“Why does this word appeal to me precisely in this manner? Through what ancestral process has rhythm come to exercise so profound an influence over me? To what good end do I weep over tragedy and hold my breath for the outcome of struggle? Of what use to my remote ancestry were the emotions the echo of which is now present to my consciousness? Or to what personal and racial end

do I even now feel what my inborn, inherited constitution compels me to feel in the presence of these suggestions?"

If every literary student could realize that life and not enjoyment is the end of living—that emotion is not an end in itself but a means to life, in Prof. Bolton's phrase, merely "the atmosphere in which we learn new things," that the origin of emotions is to be looked for in the struggle of man with environment, ancestral as well as presently actual, the realization would tend to broaden his outlook. He would not then be content with naming and classifying the phases of his own experience. He would more and more come to an appreciation of his relationship to wide social activities, and of his position in the endless chain of life, would gain a measure of the *universal consciousness*, which is the highest mark of the attainment of true culture.

The existence of the literature of the world, designed to appeal to the sympathies of men, to stir them to all sorts of functional activities, presupposes a broad basis of common organic relationship. The author of a poem or a story rightly presumes that, generally speaking, the *same stimulus will evoke an identical response in a thousand different human creatures*... And after allowing for all distinctions of temperament and education and for wide differences in individual habit and experience, there is still a vast sub-stratum of the universal, the *elemental* in thought and emotional attitude, due to community in origin and history; and on this common ground the writer builds with confidence and success. The present studies will be devoted to the consideration of some of these primary modes of emotional reaction, to those great phenomena with which men have struggled longest and to the best purposes, and the illustrations of their effect in the literature of the world.

#### THE THESIS

My thesis is as follows: *Those objects and institutions and ideas toward which there is a characteristic, universal and*

*identical response, and which therefore furnish the ultimate basis of literary appeal, are the objects and institutions and ideas which at crucial points in racial history have been agents of selection in determining the survival of the race.*

Not all forms of writing are of equal literary value. Indeed only a small part of what is written is literature. Those words of potency, those themes and phrases big with meaning and emotional suggestion, *are the words and themes and phrases that have power to reinstate for us the great selective situations of racial life* and which carry along with them the power to awaken echoes of old emotions of joy and terror and triumph. The painter, looking for a proper subject for his picture, never thinks of copying the outlines of the state house or the skyscraper of the business district. But he goes away into the woods or upon the prairie and finds a pioneer cabin falling to decay. And this cabin, lying out to the wind and sky, or upon the artist's canvas, has the power of emotional appeal, for it represents a state of living which man has outgrown, suggesting an environment in which one time long ago he won his right to live; and now it vaguely images the fierce pangs of suffering and struggle, sublimated and mellowed by present satisfactions of triumph and well being. By the same test, the spinning wheel, the coat of mail, the sickle of the reaper, and the trundle-bed, are proper subjects of art, whereas the factory, the machine gun and the McCormick harvester can not be such, in our generation. These illustrations may suggest a psychological principle which has to do with the selection of materials in any line of art.

#### THE SCOPE OF THESE STUDIES.

Quite evidently, the space of the following pages will not avail to carry us very far into investigations so broad as are suggested by the thesis here announced. My purpose is to take up a few of the great natural elements of the environment of primitive man which were prominent factors in the determina-

tion of the question of survival, such as the forests, the sea, the streams, the mountains, fire, frost, night, the sun, the stars; and to discuss the nature of man's association with these phenomena and the origin of his emotional reactions toward them. The appearance of the images of these objects in literature and the effect of their employment as elements of theme and of description will be illustrated by citations. The association of man with the beasts will be similarly treated. Then will follow a discussion of the struggle of man with man—a discussion of man himself as a vital fact in the environment of each individual, with application to the general subject of the literature of Personality. In conclusion a survey of the great themes of literature will be made, showing the application of our general principle to the selection of the subjects and *motifs* of literary construction.

Just a word here, to anticipate a possible criticism of these studies, based on a misconception of their intended direction and scope. In a sense they are not historical—they do not inquire, for instance, at what place in the literature of any people the element of nature-description first appears, where mountains are first mentioned, where the fire-terror is first evoked for a literary purpose. Our supposition is that these primal attitudes have for indefinite reaches of time characterized mankind, and that the poets, sooner or later were bound to discover the potency of words which should appeal to the elemental loves and fears. To illustrate: *Not When do mountains first appear in Literature? but What is the basis of their appeal whenever they do appear?* is our present inquiry.

*Literature is Life at the crucial moment.* It is the art which epitomizes the life-and-death interests of racial history. Its emotional effects constitute an acknowledgment and record of the influences of environment which have determined and still in a measure are determining the survival of our species. With this statement of principle, we enter upon the detailed elaboration of our thesis.



The first chapter of Emerson's *Nature* series contain the following sentences :

But if a man would be alone let him look at the stars.

The sun illuminates only the eye of a man, but shines into the eye and heart of a child.

In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods we return to reason and faith.

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable.

The waving of the boughs in the storm is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown.

There is in these statements the clear recognition of an experience which many will recognize as personal to themselves. The Psychologist would declare that these so-called natural objects, the stars, the fields and woods, the stream, the waving boughs, all invite appropriate reactions, rendered habitual and inevitable by a thousand generations of use. It is no metaphor, therefore, in strict analysis, to declare that a man going into the woods returns to his own habitat and renews his youth in re-assuming the environment of the earlier years of racial life. Every student of literature has been impressed with the tremendous effectiveness of all words and descriptive phrases which suggest the environment of nature. Especially have writers of our generation caught the knack of employing these elemental forces in every phase and department of their work. It is as if a vast treasure-house were unlocked and every way-farer invited to draw at will upon its inexhaustible resources.

The words which name those objects and activities that have moved the race to its most pronounced and habitual reactions constitute the language of power. Emerson says, again :\*

\* *Language*, Chap. IV of *Nature* series.

The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose senses have been nourished by their fair and appeasing changes, year after year, without design and without heed—shall not lose their lesson altogether in the roar of cities or the broil of politics. \* \* \* \* At the call of a noble sentiment, again the woods wave, the pines murmur, the river rolls and shines, and the cattle low upon the mountains, as he saw and heard them in his infancy. *And with these forms, the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands.*

It ought to be of profit, therefore, to consider certain of those natural phenomena which have most closely associated themselves with man's life and development, and to see how vital these phenomena become as forces in the making of literature.

#### TREES.

Why should the mention of a tree, its form, its height, its foliage, its associated sounds, move a reader to lively interest, make his pulse beat faster, stir his liveliest fancies or his deepest religious impulse? Certain it is that authors depend upon an atmosphere of forestry to redeem their tales from dullness, to impart to them tone and depth, to keep the reader's sympathies alive. Tennyson's story of *The Princess* furnishes an example. The casual reader is likely to be only dimly conscious of the effective art involved in the innumerable tree-suggestions, yet the narrative, stripped bare of trees, would lack a very considerable portion of its stately charm. The following lines, while contributing little to the progress of the story as such, must be regarded as most vital to the final effect of the piece as a whole.

\* \* \* And over head  
The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty lime  
Made noise with bees and breeze from end to end.

But when the council broke I rose and pass'd  
Thro' the wild woods that hung about the town;  
Found a still place and pluck'd her likeness out,—  
Laid it on flowers, and watch'd it lying bathed  
In the green gleam of dewy-tassel'd trees.

A wind arose and rush'd upon the South;  
And shook the songs, the whispers and the shrieks  
Of the wild woods together.

And rode till midnight, when the college lights  
Began to glitter fire-fly-like in copse  
And linden alley.

\* \* \* \* And we

Down from the lean and wrinkled precipices,  
By every coppice-feather'd chasm and cleft,  
Dropp'd through the ambrosial gloom.

A tree

Was half disrooted from his place and stoop'd  
To drench his dark locks in the gurgling wave  
Mid-channel.

Then rode we with the old king across the lawns  
Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of Spring  
In every bole, a song on every spray  
Of birds that piped their valentines.

By them went

The enamor'd air sighing, and on their curls  
From the high tree the blossom wavering fell.

Till notice of a change in the dark world  
Was lisped about the acacias, and a bird,  
That early woke to feed her little ones,  
Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light.

Passing by, as too remote from our present concern, the morphological evidence of man's unnumbered generations of arboreal life, we may consider briefly the nature of the psychic impress received from the long companionship with trees. Dr. Quantz \* enumerates the following instincts and emotions, for an explanation of which we must "seek far back when conditions of life differed widely from those of today:" an instinctive fear of wild animals, or what has less present justification, the fear of reptiles; the fear of thunder and lightning; the fear of high winds, which is common even in districts never visited by tornadoes; the fear of falling (barophobia); the fear of strangers; of the woods; agoraphobia, or fear of open spaces. Now every one of these fears was an important factor in survival. Lacking any one of them, the individual must have gone early to his death. Those who failed to develop the saving instinct were in fact cut off, and the tendency toward the appropriate act in the presence of forest enemies was thus confirmed throughout all the generations of arboreal life.

It will be observed that the character of man's early association with trees was such as to develop naturally into a mingling of fear and affection. Trees were indeed a shelter from heat and cold, yet their protection was not adequate against the terrors of the storm; they furnished refuge from enemies, but were in turn the concealment of the foe; they furnished foods of certain sorts in abundance, yet were wont unaccountably, in certain years, to withhold their largess, entailing seasons of famine and great suffering.

Thus the associated aspects of friendliness and mystery and terror were well calculated to merge into what, in the period of man's more highly developed consciousness came to be felt as the religious emotions. We know it to be true that the observances of religious ceremonial have among diverse peoples in all ages been associated with the woods. "The groves were God's first Temples," in very truth. Grimm\*\* declares:

\* *Dendro Psychoses*, American Journal of Psychology, Vol. IX, P. 461 et seq.

\*\* *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. by Stallybrass.

Temple then means also *wood*. What we figure to ourselves as a built and walled house, resolves itself, the farther back we go, into a holy place untouched by human hand, embowered and shut in by self-grown trees. There dwells the deity, veiling his form in rustling foliage of the boughs. \* \* \* \* When long afterwards the architecture peculiar to the Teutons reached its perfection, did it not in its boldest creations still aim at reproducing the waving trees of the forest?

The people of New England regard it as singularly fitting that at the moment of the inception of a New World civilization,

"The sounding aisles of the dim woods rang  
To the anthems of the free."

To this day, no house of worship seems so appropriate as the one crept over by clambering ivy and topped by lofty trees.

The spirit of animism which in the child mind of our day peoples the solitary woods with goblins, gnomes and fairies doubtless vastly antedates even the ancient period of dryads and satyrs. We may well believe that there was a time when men thought not that there were spirits *among* the trees nor *in* the trees, but that the very trees themselves *were* spirits; or, to be more exact, man did not distinguish between the kind of life which he enjoyed and that of the tree and the animal. To quote again from Dr. Quantz: \*

Man did not begin with the distinct notion of himself as a being separate from all else in the universe, and later proceed to endow the objects surrounding him with his own mental characteristics; rather, all nature was to him one, other animals and objects possessing the same mental qualities and powers as himself. Only much later did he begin to differentiate himself, and the real question is not, Why should primitive man have believed trees to be spirits?

\* *Dendro Psychoses*.

but, Why should he not? and How came it about later that he did not? \* \* \* Why should he not ascribe life and spirit to such objects as trees which grew as he did; which possessed the power of motion within limited spaces; which uttered sounds no more unintelligible perhaps than the language of foreign tribes; which expressed by movements such emotions as anger or joy, which he himself showed by similar gestures? Why should not the strength of an oak inspire him with the thought that it was a powerful spirit? The distinction between body and spirit was vague at first, and is so still in the lowest races. \* \* \* Only when he began to reason about his own soul, and lose his close relation to external nature, did he begin to question the possession of souls by the objects about him. Only when he turned his gaze within, and lost his former perspective, did he begin to imagine that *he* was the universe. \* \* \* The poets have never quite lost sight of the thought that man is only an essential part of the great unity of nature, and to them the trees, the flowers, and the streams have ever been living things, of thought and feeling, desire and will. Children, too, representing the childhood of the race, have always believed trees to be alive and sentient.

In the disposition of children to *name* every tree in the garden, as well as every calf and chick and duckling in the farm yard, and in the so-called "personification," of the poets, we realize the continued existence of that spirit of animism which was so completely characteristic of our ancestors in their attitude toward the objects of their environment.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,  
 Delaying as the tender ash delays  
 To clothe herself, when all the woods are green? \*

\* Tennyson: *The Princess*.

Waving, whispering trees,  
 What do you say to the breeze  
 And what says the breeze to you? \*

The murmuring pines

and the hemlocks,  
 Bearded with moss, and in garments gray, indistinct  
 in the twilight,  
 Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and  
 prophetic,  
 Stand like harpies hoar, with beards that rest on  
 their bosoms. \*\*

The beech is bare, and bare the ash,  
 The thickets white below;  
 The fir-tree scowls with hoar moustache,  
 He cannot sing for snow. \*\*\*

Ye lispers, whisperers, singers in storms,  
 Ye consciences murmuring faiths under forms,  
 Ye ministers meet for each passion that grieves,  
 Friendly, sisterly, sweetheart leaves,  
 O rain me down from your darks that contain me  
 Wisdoms ye winnow from winds that pain me,—  
 Sift down tremors of sweet-within-sweet  
 That advise me of more than they bring,—repeat  
 Me the woods-smell that swiftly but now brought  
 breath

From the heaven-side bank of the river of death,—  
 Teach me the terms of silence,—preach me  
 The passion of patience,—sift me,—impeach me,—  
 And there, Oh there  
 As ye hang with your myriad palms upturned in the air  
 Pray me a myriad prayer. \*\*\*

\* D. G. Rossetti: *Adieu*.

\*\* Longfellow: *Evangeline*.

\*\*\* Bayard Taylor: *December*.

\*\*\*\* Lanier: *Sunrise*.



The close kinship with the trees which was once realized as the merest matter of course now occasions deep surprise, and becomes a sacred mystery when the poet renews for an hour this primal relationship:

Tell me, sweet burly-bark'd, man-bodied Tree  
That mine arms in the dark are embracing, dost know  
From what fount are these tears at thy feet which flow?  
They rise not from reason, but deeper inconsequent deeps.

Reason's not one that weeps.

What logic of greeting lies

Betwixt dear over-beautiful trees and the rain of the  
eyes? \*

What logic indeed, if we fail to realize that the trees were our best friends and true companions for many milleniums before humanity weaned itself from the ministrations of these patient comforters; if we forget that the forest still cherishes the rich inspiration of ten thousand years of myth and legend and hallowed tradition?

The forest then, was for countless generations the closely environing medium of the life of man. It is so still, for a very large portion of the human race. Whole tribes and nations of human beings to this day depend largely if not entirely, for their food, upon the fruits, the nuts and the roots which the friendly forest yields. Tree culture is one of the colossal interests in the commercial life of civilized races; and the preservation of forest resources is a problem for congresses and governors and kings. At a hundred points the tree touches even yet the intimate things of man's daily necessity. What we call its aesthetic value, its beauty, its vague and nameless charm, is doubtless an outgrowth of our response, through the vast period of racial association, to these various utilities.

#### THE HEAVENLY BODIES

The sun, the stars, the moon, together with the closely associated phenomena of fire and frost, warmth and cold, light and darkness, and the changing year, form a group of psychic influences the power of which, in the development of the individual and of the race, is beyond all ability of mind to conceive. Man is the one animal that walks erect and looks abroad with "upward eyes," and this upward view has furnished the stimulus to his most daring effort of mind; so that Darwin names as

\* Lanier: *Sunrise*.

the most exalted triumph of his godlike intellect, that he "has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system." The major portion of the average man's labor is performed with a more or less direct reference to four primary needs: shelter, light, fire, food, all of which except the last, and even the last in part, being consciously recognized as attributable to the presence or absence of the sun. The life of the laborer is lived with an eye constantly directed to the solar movements: the summer is busy because the hours of labor are long, glad because fuel is required in small amount, the lamp scarcely need ever be lighted, the wind that blows through faulty walls and windows is not unwelcome and the warm soil will yield a quick and easy fruitage to the labor of his hand and hoe. The night and the winter are teachers of the great moral lessons of industry and continence and thrift.

In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thy hand. \* \* \* \* Work while it is the day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work. \* \* \* And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you, \* \* \* And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Such allegories as this of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and the familiar fable of the Ant and the Grasshopper, portraying the felicity and triumph of those who provide for night and winter and the unsucccess of those who do not, are symbolical of conditions of life antedating by vast stretches of time the essentially modern invention of the oil lamp. A knowledge of how to produce fire, how to preserve it and to appropriate it to the uses of mankind marks the beginning of industry and of systematic living. The fire of the rude smiths of antiquity made possible the forging of the weapons of the chase and of defense and the implements of agriculture; while the household fire became the center of the home. To this day, the traveller's home is where his fire is kindled, and he carries the potential joys of domesticity in his box of sulphur matches. Those races that early subdued the element of fire to their uses thereby attained a tremendous advantage in the struggle for existence, and

those individuals who learned wisdom and foresight in the employment of this powerful agent became the survivors of their kind.

External Nature, so-called, performs the great service in man's psychic development of furnishing the plastic material on which invention may operate. In the form of an environment which creates a need, nature also provides the stimulus which is both the beginning and the aim of his activity. When the energy of the man, operating in a variety of directions upon the materials furnished, chances upon a successful result, he experiences the birth of an idea. When a man, by the rubbing together of two sticks, produced fire, with which he could successfully combat the rigors of winter frost, he achieved the beginning of a chain of discoveries which were destined to make him the master of the earth, free to wander at will in every season and in every climate. And the best effort of his intellect has been given in succeeding time to the extension and improvement of his primitive invention, down to the present era, of furnace heat and lighting by electricity.

The fact of the near relation which light and heat phenomena have borne and still bear to the necessary activities of life would be sufficient to account for much of the literary force of the language which represents them. The sun "marks our lying down and our uprising"—it climbs northward in the heavens and we plant our seed, it sinks away, and we harvest and gather in the crops. Men plan night journeys by a knowledge of the moon's phases, and sail ships by the direction of the stars.

But when the full count of this sort of immediate and easily recognized services is made, we have still left unmentioned a service of immeasurable importance to our psychic life to which literary usage bears the most abundant testimony. The heavenly bodies and the phenomena of light and darkness furnish material both plastic and inexhaustible for the development of fancy.

How important is the exercise of the fancy in the development of intellect will be realized when we reflect that a vast proportion of all the activities of childhood, the most important period in the development of the self, are concerned with fancy; or, as we term it in more homely phrase, with "Make-believe." Childhood's play is of incalculable importance in the development of mind; and that play consists largely in naming things

what they are *not*, in treating objects first in one way, then in another, giving them all manner of fancied and diverse characteristics and entities. Thus a boy calls his stick his horse, his little brother a wild Indian or a wolf, himself a hero of romance or a railroad engine. This is the genius of the inventor, *to think things in a variety of aspects*; and we prophecy the strength of the future mind from the childish activity in play. \*

Now a sand pile and a bank of fleecy clouds are treated by the child after a fashion in many respects the same. Both are plastic, and offer themselves to be made into an infinite variety of shapes. There is this distinction, however, that the sand is tangible and suggests a reaction that is complete and satisfying. The boy may make houses or farms or windmills out of it, dig caves in it or make showers of rain out of its particles; whereas the clouds are distant and inaccessible and invite only slight bodily reactions—he must let the winds drive them into varied forms while he lies on his back and achieves his satisfaction from conceiving them to represent a variety of things—mansions with majestic domes, animals of the jungle, continents and islands and hosts of marching men. With that, the element of distance, of inaccessibility, of the unknown, adds to his experience the not unwelcome feeling of a half defined terror, which, especially in the period of adolescence, is likely to merge into a vague religious emotion.

Now it is a principle well established by observation and testimony, scientific as well as popular, that the mental attitudes and activities of childhood, in accordance with the principle of Recapitulation, afford a general, though not an exact, reflection of the mental attitudes and activities of the savage and primitive races of mankind. What were the experiences of our primitive ancestors in looking into the heavens we can never precisely know; but of two things we may be certain—that the varying spectacle of the skies played a large part in the development of their manhood, and that the mystery of it all had much to do in creating and directing the religious habits of thought.

Scarcely less was fire in its terrestrial form a mystery. Says Max Muller: \*\*

Even before the discovery of that art (the kindling of

\* See Prof. T. L. Bolton's *Gneetic Value of Children's Make-Believe*.

\*\* *Origin and Growth of Religion*.

fire), however, which must have marked a complete revolution in his life, he had seen the sparks of lightning, he had seen and felt the warmth of the sun, he may have watched even, in utter bewilderment, the violent destruction of forests by conflagration, caused either by lightning or friction of trees in summer. In all these appearances and disappearances there was something extremely perplexing. At one moment the fire was here, at another it had gone out. Whence did it come? Whither did it go? If there ever was a ghost, in our sense of the word, it was fire. Did it not come from the clouds? Did it not vanish in the sea? Did it not live in the sun? Did it not travel through the stars? All these are questions that may sound childish to us, but which were very natural before men had taught fire to obey their commands.

Fire possessed precisely those characteristics of mystery and of power which would cause it to be both feared and loved. Man's friend and comforter, defense and household servant, it would yet arise in wrath and consume his dwelling. Difficult, by man's rude methods, to coax out of nature, care must be taken to cherish the flame, hence arose the idea of the sacred fire which must never be allowed to go out. Hence also the idea of the local deity of the home; a man's fire-place was the dwelling of his household god. To this day the hearth is the symbol of the inviolability of the home.

Fear no evil, my friend, and tonight  
may no shadow of sorrow  
Fall on this house and hearth. \*

The tradition of fire-worship still lingers in the fancies of children and of the poets, who preserve in their lines the impulse of youth, both individual and racial.

For the room has a spirit in the embers,  
'Tis a god, and our fathers knew his name,  
And they worshiped him in long forgot Decembers,  
And their hearts leaped high with the flame! \*\*

The fancy of the conquering of frost by fire with the attend-

\* Longfellow. *Evangeline*.

\*\* Richard Harvey: *A Winter Song*.

ant glee, the triumph over the blustering enemy, is not infrequently depicted in verse:

He comes—he comes—the Frost Spirit comes!  
 let us meet him as we may,  
 And turn with the light of the parlor fire his  
 evil power away:  
 And gather closer the circle round, when the  
 fire-light dances high,  
 And laugh at the shriek of the baffled Fiend,  
 as his sounding wing goes by! \*

Shut in from all the world without,  
 We sat the clean-winged hearth about,  
 Content to let the north-wind roar  
 In baffled rage at pane and door,  
 While the red logs before us beat  
 The frost-line back with tropic heat. \*\*

Coming now to a more detailed examination of some of the literary uses of the element under discussion, fire and frost, light and shadow can, in the nature of things, play little part as major themes, either in poetry or in narrative. In the latter, the element of the fire-scene is occasionally employed in the advancement of plot and the revealment of character, as in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* or in Victor Hugo's *Ninety-Three*. In verse, one finds occasional brief lyrics given up to winter or fire-light fancies, as illustrated by lines already quoted.

But as a secondary, or contributive, mode the use of lights and shadows, and fire and cold, is widely extended. Their effectiveness in the production of "atmosphere," in inducing the gay or somber mood, is beyond estimation. In the following lines, taken from modern song literature, the light and shadow effects are made to reflect the mood of the human character of the piece, and to induce the corresponding mood in the reader. In the first extract, the mood is quiet melancholy; in the second, despair.

*The shadows lie across the dim old room;*

*The firelight glows, and fades into the gloom;*  
 While Memory sails to childhood's distant shore,

\* Whittier. *Snow-Bound*.

\*\* The Same: *Snow Bound*.

And dreams and dreams of days that are no more.

*No star is o'er the lake its pale watch keeping;  
The moon is half awake, through gray mist creeping;  
The last red leaves fall round the porch of roses;  
The clock has ceased to sound, the long day closes.*

*Sit by the silent hearth, in calm endeavor  
To count the sounds of mirth, now dumb forever;  
Heed not how hope believes and fate disposes;  
Shadow is round the eaves, the long day closes.*

*The lighted windows dim are fading slowly;  
The fire that was so trim now quivers lowly;  
Go to thy dreamless bed, where grief reposes;  
Thy book of toil is read—the Long Day closes!*

The evident allegorical significance in the imagery of the verses last quoted may serve to introduce a few words of discussion, just here, of the principle of metaphor. The line of demarcation between the "literal" and the "figurative" is not in all cases clear, even to the astute man of letters; is in very many or in most cases obscure to the man of the street, as it is to the beginner in literary study; and most certainly did not exist at all in the mind of the primitive speaker. If we could go far enough back we should doubtless find *all language figurative*, or, regarded from the primitive standpoint, *all language literal*. Expressions which to us indicate fanciful analogies were to our savage progenitors veritable identities. Thus *light* became the inevitable metaphor of *knowledge*, and *darkness* of *ignorance*, for light and seeing and knowledge were coexistent and coextensive, hence identical—and so also their opposites. Personification, which, in modern writing, is a conscious literary device was no figure of speech to men who thought that spirits actually had their homes in trees and lakes and streams. The symbolism of poetry even in our day points back long ages to a time when, in the absence of scientific knowledge, men believed in the verity of their own fancies.

Finally, it should be remarked that the charm of what we call a good figure of speech does not often consist entirely, or even mainly, in the mere aptness of the figure in its representa-



tion of the thought intended. A great metaphor should do more than to satisfy the requirement of logical application. The *image* which it evokes must be one of power in its own right, and interesting *in itself*, apart from its symbolical use. To say that a man saved from a great sin or a great temptation was "plucked as a brand from the burning" is a stroke of literary art not simply because the figure is logically an adequate representation of the facts, but because the image suggested is one of strong emotional appeal, because every individual and racial experience with flaming brands has been such as to predispose us to quick and alert interest, on the instant the image is presented. Words which suggest the mental pictures of the flaring torch or the burning sunset are therefore of great literary potency *of themselves*, regardless of any particular figurative application in which they may be used. When Julia Ward Howe exclaims:

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred  
                   circling camps;  
 They have builded Him an altar in the evening  
                   dews and damps;  
 I can read His righteous sentence by the dim  
                   and flaring lamps,

it is no more the major meaning, of justice and purpose and swift, retribution, which gives power to the lines than it is the blazing fire-images, circling, flaring, against the dim background of night woods and glimmering tents.

So of the widely quoted lines of Tennyson:

Sunset and evening star  
 And one clear call for me.

The idea of preparation for death is a stately one, but the verses will owe their immortality to the fact that in the expression of his thought the poet summoned to his aid the sublimity with which ten thousand years of contemplation have invested the phenomena which he employs as symbols. And no one knew better than Tennyson the effectiveness of these images. More than once he had employed similar figures to redeem a passage otherwise barren and commonplace or to impart to a more splendid one a crowning grandeur:

A prince I was, blue eyed, and fair in face,

Of temper amorous, as the first of May,  
With lengths of yellow ringlets, like a girl,  
*For on my cradle shone the northern star.* \*

And, tost on thought that changed from hue to hue,  
Now poring on the glow worm, now the star,  
I paced the terrace, *till the Bear had wheel'd*  
*Thro' a great arc his seven slow suns.* \*\*

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb  
E'en to the highest he could climb, and saw,  
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,  
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,  
Down that long water opening on the deep  
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go  
From less to less and vanish into light.  
*And the sun rose bringing the new year.* \*\*\*

### CHILD FANCIES

The literature of fancy gives voice to native instinct and records the native attitudes of children and of natural men toward the phenomena of the elements. A series of questions intended to gain from young people their memories of childish fancies regarding sunrise, the dawn, darkness, etc., elicited such answers as the following, selected from a very extensive list: \*\*\*\*

I always picture the dawn as an airy graceful girl in glistening robes——

When watching the sun rise I am very apt to think of an old man with a heavy pack on his back. I had this idea at about seven and it still continues as an association.

I fancied that the moon had been doing something wrong and the sun was coming after her. As soon as the moon saw the sun coming she dodged out of sight.

I thought that there was a big giant who pushed the sun up.

I fancied that night was an immense goddess with a

\* *The Princess.* Canto I.

\*\* *Same.* Canto II.

\*\*\* *The Passing of Arthur,* last Stanza.

\*\*\*\* Hall and Smith: *Reactions to Light and Darkness.* Am. Jpsych., Vol. XIV.

black dress studded with stars and a moon which she spread over the sky.

I used to think that God had a big black rag and covered up the sun and that the stars were little gold dots on it.

One's first impulse, on reading a page of answers such as these, is to exclaim at the faithfulness with which they reproduce the primitive view of things, classical myth and savage superstition; the second, to remark the inherent *poetical* quality of the observations. "These children were poets," one might say; but the truer statement would be, "Poets are still children."

Mrs. Browning declares:

The poet has the child sight in his breast  
And sees all new. What oftenest he has seen  
He views with the first glory.

The charm of the Poet's fancy inheres in the reader's experience of a return to his own youth, i. e., to the period of his own keenest activity, and hence to the youth of mankind. Thus by a reminiscent suggestion one finds old fires of ardor rekindled at the restatement, with the added power of rhythmic utterance, of such naive, illogical, child fancies as the following:

And Night withdraws, and on their silver cars  
Wheel to remotest space the trembling Stars. \*

Night's candles are burnt out and jocund Day  
Stands tip-toe on the misty mountain tops. \*\*

If further parallels between the child fancy and the poet fancy is needed the following may serve. The expressions of the children's thought are taken from the work of Hall and Smith quoted above.

Question: *Does the sun enflame?*

Child: I always wondered why, when the sun set, it did not set fire to the trees, because it seemed to touch them. Sometimes when the sky grew quite red, I would become

\* Bayard Taylor. *Desert Hymn to the Sun*.

\*\* Shakespere: *Romeo and Juliet*.

quite frightened, for I thought the sun had set the sky on fire and all the world was going to burn.

Poet: And the evening sun descending  
Set the clouds on fire with redness.  
Burned the broad sky like a prairie. \*

Child: As the sun set in the west, I thought as a child that the big fire was almost out and needed more fuel.

Poet: Burned to a coal is the amber day;  
Noon's splendid fire has faded away;  
And, lodged on the edge of a world grass grown,  
Like a great live ember, glows the sun:  
When it falls behind the crimson bars,  
Look out for the sparks of the early stars. \*\*

Child: I thought the sun was sorry to say good night and that when the disc just touched the top of the hill it stopped to say a last good night.

Poet: The stars of night contain the glittering day  
And rain his glory down with sweeter grace  
Upon the dark world's grand enchanted face,  
All loth to turn away.  
And so the day, about to yield his breath,  
Utters the stars unto the listening night  
To stand as blazing fare-thee-wells of light  
Said on the verge of death. \*\*\*

Much of the daintiest poetry of recent years consciously expresses the naive attitudes of childhood and reproduces not only the fancies but in a measure the very phraseology of infant years.

O Moon, in the night I have seen you sailing  
And shining so round and low;  
You were bright, ah, bright, but your light is failing;  
You're nothing now but a bow.  
You moon, have you done something wrong in heaven

\* Longfellow. *Hiawatha*.

\*\* Benj. F. Taylor: *Evening on the Farm*.

\*\*\* Sidney Lanier: *The Dying Words of Stonewall Jackson*.

That God has hidden your face?  
 I hope if you have you will soon be forgiven  
 And shine again in your place. \*

Late lies the weary sun a-bed,  
 A frosty, fiery sleepy head;  
 Blinks but an hour or two; and then,  
 A blood red orange, sets again.

When to go out my nurse doth wrap  
 Me in my comforter and cap;  
 The cold wind burns my face, and blows  
 Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;  
 Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;  
 And tree and house, and hill and lake  
 Are frosted like a wedding-cake. \*\*

To quote once more from Hall and Smith:

To science, all these (fancies concerning light rays) are only rank weeds of ignorance and superstition to be extricated, or at the best, products of bad observation. \* \* \* So some would let the pedagogue loose upon all these abortions of the mytho-poetic faculty and make the child early ashamed of its creations. But the age of fancy comes first and is no whit less in need of full development in its nascent stage than science in its. Normally, the latter develops naturally out of the former and with no opposition, each strengthening the other and each suffering if the other is undeveloped. The cultured adult, if the genius of childhood is not killed in him, reverts to all the delicious dreameries of early days and recognizes in them the seeds of whatever aesthetic appreciation he may be capable of enjoying.

A gentleman of attainment and standing in the scientific world took occasion, in concluding a lecture before an assembly of his associates, to read a paragraph from popular literature,

\* Jean Ingelow. *Seven Times One*.

\*\* Robert Louis Stevenson: *Winter Time*.

characterized by daring fancy and challenging metaphor. This the speaker prefaced by a careful apology and read with deprecatory hesitation, as if to disarm the stern criticism of his matter-of-fact colleagues. But he need have entertained no craven fears for the reception of the choice paragraph. The picturesque in diction has need of no apologist. The language of great thought, on the contrary, *has* need of every element of power it can summon to its aid, and the images of fancy have in them the strength of virile youth. The terms of fancy, of rich imagery, have power to awaken in us those reverberations of old passion, of wonder and fear and triumph which had their beginning beyond the period of our own early days—in the far off and forgotten years of the primitive life, the fierce struggles and the dawning consciousness and intelligence of our common humanity. In the light of this thought, genetic psychology would give a new interpretation to what at one time seemed an element of the mystical, not to be explained, in Wordsworth's great lines: \*

Not in entire forgetfulness  
 And not in utter nakedness  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
     From God, who is our home:  
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
     Upon the growing boy  
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
     He sees it in his joy;  
 The Youth who daily farther from the east  
     Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
     And by the vision splendid  
     Is on his way attended;  
 At length the Man perceives it die away  
 And fade into the light of common day.  
 Hence in a season of calm weather  
     Though inland far we be  
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
     Which brought us hither,  
     Can in a moment travel thither,  
 And see the children sport upon the shore  
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

\* *Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood.*

If, in spite of the objection of certain literary critics, we regard as veritable this experience of *growing away* from fancy and dreams and the mystical faith and vision of childhood, the reality of which appears to have been attested by the consciousness of many readers, the phenomenon might be restated in the language of science, thus: Just as the body of an embryo seems to pass through the various stages of its morphological evolution from the lowest forms of animal life, so the mind of the child, in its unfolding seems to recapitulate the psychic evolution of mankind. With the coming of adult years the activities of fancy, characteristic of primitive modes of thinking, give place in large measure to the more restricted, the carefully directed and purposeful operations of logical thought.

In concluding this section of the present study a few sentences must be devoted to an effort at defining the point of view assumed here as concerning the origin of the emotion experienced in contemplating so-called "beautiful" objects. Emerson says \* in one place:

The shows of day, the dewy morning, the rainbow, mountains, orchards in blossom, stars, moonlight, shadows in still water, and the like, if too eagerly hunted, become shows merely, and mock us with their unreality. Go out of the house to see the moon, and 'tis mere tinsel; it will not please as when its light shines upon your necessary journey.

The admission herein contained would seem to be a step in the direction of the position held by some psychologists, that beauty has no *a priori* existence; that forms and colors are not innately beautiful, but that beauty as a primary experience merely attends the appropriation of an object to the uses of the individual, and by its presence or absence determines for or against a certain activity. Emotions of pleasure form the atmosphere of progressive action. An object, say, which represents food, acts as stimulus, the bodily functions are called into play to grasp it, circulation is quickened, the system assumes an attitude of expansion, and pleasure is felt. This feeling of pleasure comes to be associated with the appearance of the object itself, the orange, the cluster of grapes, and we come at last to

\* *Beauty*, Chapter III of *Nature Series*.



attribute the experience to the thing itself—to say that the cluster is itself beautiful. The truth is that a sight of the object, or even of the pictured object or the *word* representing it, tends to incite to activities habitually performed in presence of it, and hence to induce the pleasurable emotion.

A further fact in the evolution of emotion should be noted here: Aesthetic value is the result of *reflection* and belongs to a comparatively late period in psychic development. Objects are first valued for what they are in themselves, for the uses they subserve, the wants they satisfy—But when many objects are found evoking the same reactions, the noticeable characteristics of those object-groups, such as *redness* or *roundness* come to be regarded as abstractions, as permanent qualities of the desirable, and are thus generalized as beauty elements.

To apply the principle more broadly—light reveals objects which stimulate to action, hence is associated with expansion and activity, hence with pleasure, or beauty. Sunrise is a call to life and fruitful labor, hence is joyful. Darkness, associated as it is with cold, in as much as darkness and cold inhibit action and render it dangerous, causes one to recoil upon himself, to crouch, to walk timidly if at all; and every bodily sense, of muscular contraction, of lessened circulation and of visceral adjustment helps to produce the bodily sensation of terror.

It is not demonstrable that animals representing the lower forms of life have any so-called “sense of the beautiful.” It seems fair to suppose that man must have used the stars for guides in forests and desert places for centuries before he came to any definite realization that they were possessed of aesthetic value. His sense of their beauty is an outgrowth, a sort of crystalization of the vague emotions of pleasure that have accompanied the various activities with which they have been associated.

There is something, indeed, infinitely pathetic—we are wont to think *mysteriously* pathetic—about the stars: so much so that the very combination of vowels and consonants in the word itself seems beautiful to those who speak it, in any language; the emotional potency of the word is beyond measure, so that merely to repeat the word aloud in varying intonation is often more expressive than a poem. Thus where the old German musician in Turgenev’s *House of Gentlefolk* wished to declare the theme of the great composition which in the ecstasy

of a great moment he felt moved to write, he felt it enough to say——

“It should be something like this: ‘Ye stars! Ye pure stars!’ ”

Now I take it this transcendent poetry of the firmament, the chaste excitement one feels in the contemplation of the stars, whether present to sense or to memory, does not grow up in the single experience, and limited space of an individual life. It can scarcely be accounted for on grounds less broad than the persistent associations of race development. Throughout the thousands of generations of the unconscious, unreflecting life of our progenitors, the sky was a prime factor in the evolution of the sense of orientation. Thus, ages before men amused themselves with “star fancies,” the heavenly bodies, by their fixed position in reference to the surface of the earth were contributing largely to the formation of that *sense of direction* without which wide activities are impossible. And in all later periods of the growing consciousness and militant progress of the race, the stars have kept their place as an indispensable factor of use. Thus the metaphor of the “guiding star” was inevitable some thousands of years before the words were framed in human speech, and still other thousands before a complete science of safe travel for sea and desert was to be won from the heavens by the triumphing genius of man. It was inevitable that the star should become the symbol of assurance in perplexity:

Rise in thy beauty, O thou star of the mōrning!  
If on the desert wild my pathway may be,  
Break on my vision through the night clouds above me.  
Star of my only hope, shine for me. \*

The symbol of intellectual certitude:

Yes—where the desert creature’s heart, at fault  
Amid the scattering tempest’s pillared sands,  
Betrays its step into the pathless drift—  
The calm instructed eye of man holds fast  
By the sole bearing of the visible star,  
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside,

\* Old Hymn.

The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again—  
The palm-tree and the pyramid over all. \*

The symbol of religious faith:

As in the dawning, o'er the waveless ocean  
The image of the morning star doth rest,  
So in this stillness Thou beholdest  
Only Thine image in the waters of my breast. \*\*

The symbol of hope and promise:

When they had heard the king, they departed; and  
lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before  
them, till it came and stood over where the young child  
was. \*\*\*

### THE SEA

The waters of the earth have in all ages served as an insistent stimulus to the psychic development of humanity. Of the three elemental media of life, the earth, the air, and the sea, the first was comparatively easy of conquest, the second absolutely beyond control, inaccessible and furnishing therefore no direct incentive to bodily activity; while the third was ever at hand, challenging man to do his best—opposing him with a strength vast but not unconquerable, an advantage great but not too great, taunting man with his weakness and rewarding his prowess with unparalleled joys of conquest and of freedom. Those races of men which accepted the challenge of the sea, took up the fight and continued it with unabated zeal from century to century, won life itself thereby, won permanence for their institutions, became the survivors of their kind; while those who, as for instance the negroes of the south-west coast of Africa, for succeeding thousands of years idly watched the waves beat against their cliffs or flow unheeded over their sands, are now the savage unfit, doomed to slavery and ultimate extinction.

It is not strange that an element so bound up with every primal interest of man, that has been intimately associated

\* Browning: *Luria*.

\*\* Harriet Beecher Stowe: *Still, Still With Thee*.

\*\*\* Matthew: 2-9.

with life, that has been the protection of home and the lure of conquest and the pathway of adventure—that such an element should be found occupying a position of incalculable importance in the literature of the world. The language of popular metaphor gives eloquent testimony to the sea influence in our common consciousness: *waves of passion; the tide of excitement; a harbor of safety; the ship of state; any port in time of storm; unfathomable, restless, deep, or boundless as the ocean.* Therefore if a speaker in referring to the extent of the American commonwealth would reach the imagination of his hearers, let him not bound it by artificial parallels of latitude and longitude but measure it by the flow of rivers and bound it by the wash of seas.

The word *sea* belongs to the select company of the few ilimitable and inexhaustible words which language boasts. And while no attempt at analyzing the emotional effect of so sublime a word is likely to seem adequate in the end, yet no real student of the psychological properties of words can well avoid making such attempt, even though he must expect to content himself with partial results. Let us see, therefore, whether the story of man's relationship with great bodies of water cannot throw some light on the modern uses of the word and the nature of the effect which it makes as we see it on the printed page.

### INNATE LOVE AND FEAR OF WATER

The charm of the sea is a composite of love and fear, the proportion of elements varying greatly in different persons. Scarcely any one would deny that he experiences a lively interest in viewing a body of water; not a few feel, in such presence, an unaccountable impulse to yield themselves up to the waves, while others feel an equally abnormal and uncontrollable terror. It is possible that the principle of philogenesis if called upon may be able to help in the interpretation of these special as well as the more general phenomena of water-fear and water-love. Pres. G. Stanley Hall suggests that we must go back, ages before the proper history of man as such, to find the situation which can give an adequate account of these instinctive attitudes.

Says President Hall: \*

Deducting all fairly due to individual experience, is there in these phobophillic feelings toward water any hereditary, race remnant? \* \* \* For one I incline to the view that it would be well for psychologists to postulate purely instinctive vestiges, which originated somewhere since the time when our remote ancestors left the sea, ceased to be amphibious and made the land their home. Do we not dishonor the soul by thinking it less complex or less freighted with mementos of its earlier stages of development than the body which, in the amniotic fluid medium, unfolds its earlier prenatal stages like a fish, and carries traces of the primitive gill-slits through adult life? As these latter traces are sometimes hypertrophied in teratological forms, so the old charm and the old fear of water may come to the very foreground of consciousness in exceptional cases. It is at any rate conceivable that the influence of the pre-dominant proportion of time and of volume of life that has been lived aquatically since its dawn should still make itself felt in the soul, and should find expression, especially in poetry, both more emotional and more archaic than prose, in the faint traces of struggle between fear and love occasionally seen there. \* \* \* \*  
Deepest of all the feelings for water is the old love, traces of which still survive and crop out in some features of its charm and drawing power, when it seems so cool, soft, restful, buoyant, embracing and transparent. \* \* \* \*  
Later, after land developed to continental dimensions, and amphibian habits gave away to conditions that established life permanently on land, the higher animals swam less and less, and at length water became dangerous in proportion to this loss of power. Those best adapted to land were at greatest disadvantage in water, and thus a fear of it became chronic and very strong because it must control the old love. Those that feared water most had an advantage in survival at a certain stage over those less timid. How severe must have been this discipline of weaning from the old home of all life, some childish fears \* \* \* \* still show.

Thus much of the argument will suggest an explanation of "instinctive" love and fear of water. In its better defined modes, however, the literature of the sea, in theme and in metaphor, reflects the experience of man as man in his relation to the sea as a primal force to be combated, tamed, used.

#### THE SEA AS A BOUNDARY.

Many of the phrases in which the sea as well as great rivers are mentioned constitute an acknowledgment of man's original helplessness. We still speak of seas and rivers as "natural boundaries" for nations. That which once constituted the security of a tribe also placed a limit to its conquest and migration. Modern history may be said to have begun when Caesar, as great an engineer as warrior, bridged the Rhine in a week, and the bewildered *Germani*, feeling that by a miracle the end of the old order had been reached, flocked in submission to the conquering Roman, with prayers and hostages. Thus the psalmist felt that where these natural limits existed the eye of prophecy could reach no farther.

\*He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

The fact that it has been universally felt that man's "control stops with the shore" has rendered inevitable the fancied analogy between death and a sea or river. Probably no English poem of our generation has so deeply impressed the popular fancy as Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar*, wherein the noblest philosophy of enlightened faith applied to the stateliest of all themes is bodied forth in the gigantic imagery of the sea. But the thought was centuries old before the great Laureate ever put pen to paper. Scarcely different in its essentials is Malory's description of the Passing of King Arthur:

Now put me into the barge, said the King: and so he did softly. And then received him three queens with great mourning, and so they set him down \* \* \* And so then they rowed from the land.

Or that of the Passing of Hiawatha in the Indian legend

\* Seventy-Second Psalm.

which Longfellow immortalized:

On the shore stood Hiawatha,  
Turned and waved his hand in parting;  
On the clear and luminous water  
Launched his birch canoe for sailing,  
From the pebbles of the margin  
Shoved it forth into the water;  
Whispered to it, "Westward! westward!"  
And with speed it darted forward.

Christian hymnology has caught up the old view of the river or ocean boundary, and reproduces it in a score of death songs pathetically beautiful in their use of this mystical analogue:

Over the river, the river of death;  
Into the silent land.  
Shall we gather at the river,  
Where bright angels' feet have trod?  
Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood  
Stand dressed in living green.

Nor is the metaphor absent from poetry not distinctly religious:

\*Ay, homeward bound's a joyful sound,  
But outward bound are we,  
Till, voyaging o'er, we touch the shore  
Of Death's uncharted sea!

A natural inversion of the figure makes the shore the boundary of the sea, which now becomes the image *not* of death but of life, the human career being a journey amid storms and calms, and Heaven the harbor which we seek:

Jesus, Savior, Pilot me  
Over Life's tempestuous sea.  
If on a quiet sea  
Toward Heaven we calmly sail,  
With grateful hearts, O God, to Thee  
We own the favoring gale.

\* *Outward Bound, a Song for Male Voices*, by Carl Pfeuger.

If we now turn from consideration of the interpretation of the sea metaphor to the general expression of man's emotional attitude toward the sea as found in literature, I think we may safely classify the feelings thus reflected under the two general headings of *fear* and *triumph*.

Man has fought and is still fighting an age long battle with the deep. Primitive man, for the most part, and in his sincerest moods, felt himself defeated, hence the note of terror in much of the sea poetry of the world. The high courage of intelligence however, has given man the power in supreme moments to declare himself the master of the waves, voicing a royal contempt for the brute force of the inanimate. The contrast of this cringing man and mood of nature with the erect man and mood of culture appears clearly in the dialogue represented by Joaquin Miller. \*

Behind him lay the gray Azores,  
     Behind the gates of Hercules;  
 Before him not the ghost of shores,  
     Before him only shoreless seas.  
 The good mate said: "Now let us pray,  
     For lo! the very stars are gone.  
 Brave admiral, speak, what shall I say?"  
     "Why, say, 'Sail on! Sail on! Sail on! and on!'"

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the mate:  
     "This mad sea shows his teeth tonight.  
 He curls his lip, he lies in wait,  
     With lifted teeth, as if to bite!  
 Brave admiral, say but one good word:  
     What shall we do when hope is gone?"  
 The words leapt like a leaping sword:  
     "Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!"

The pure exultation of the human creature dominating the waves and casting defiance into the teeth of warring winds is present in many songs of the sea. *A Life on the Ocean Wave, Lords of the Waves We Are, Rocking on the Billows of the Deep, Sailing, Sailing Over the Bounding Main.* The feeling

\* *Columbus.*



voiced in these reflects the common sentiment of a large part of humanity.

Untold centuries have passed since first some savage, swimming in the current of the sea or river, caught hold of a drifting log and finding it an aid in navigation conceived the idea of retaining it as a permanent equipment for traveling the waters. And every improvement of the craft, from the unhewn timber to the majestic ocean liner of our time has been associated with the keen joy of conquest; and there are a million men in this far day who feel a thrill of the age-old joy when they read that some boat has transported a greater cargo of living freight than ever was carried before, or has lessened by a few hours the aggravating distance from New York to Liverpool.

How much men would like, individually and unaided, to match themselves successfully against the sea is evident from the large place that the swimming contest has in sport, and by the periodical swimming of the British Channel by an English athlete. In more primitive times, our ancestors, admitting their own inability thus to cope with the ocean forces, yet claimed for their gods and their heroes the power of which they acknowledged themselves not to be possessed. Beowulf and Breca matched their strength upon the winter sea, the latter reaching the shore before his rival. Yet the moral victory was with Beowulf, who was five days and nights upon the icy flood and who could, and did, outswim his opponent, but voluntarily delayed to descend into the depths and put to death certain *nickers*, monsters of the deep, which had been the most powerful foes of the sailors of that region. Probably no other miraculous incident of the New Testament story, not even that of the raising of Lazarus, has so impressed itself on the imaginations of men as that of the midnight storm on the sea of Gallilee:

Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea;  
and there was a great calm.

But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man  
is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

The incident serves as inspiration for some of the most stirring and appealing of the gospel hymns, as

Master, the tempest is raging;

The billows are dashing high!

and

Fierce and wild the storm is raging  
Round the helpless bark.

Endurance with fortitude of the terrors of the deep is made the standard of religious faith in a number of songs and ballads, as in the familiar *Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep*.

In ocean cave still safe with Thee,  
Thou germ of immortality.

In late poetry, on the other hand, the mute ocean is not without its champion, and Herbert Bates flings down the defiant question,

When was God's arm stronger than the sea?

It is not surprising that the poetry of the ocean should reveal this wide variety of mood, since the experience of mankind in this relation has been so various; nor is it strange that the personal note should on the whole be tragical and hopeless. The greatest of the sea pieces of our language are full of the terror of the deep, from the mystical horror of the *Ancient Mariner* to the pensive hopelessness of *Break, Break Break*. The voice of Kingsley in the two superb poetic gems that rank him among the masters of poetry of the Victorian era is characterized by a still deeper melancholy:

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,  
To her grave beside the sea.

The cruel, crawling foam,  
The cruel, hungry foam

For men must work and women must weep,  
Though storms be sudden, and waters deep,  
And the harbour bar be moaning.

Men feel that individually they fail who pit themselves against the mystery and power of the sea. It is only man in his collective might, man re-enforced by the massed power of the race and the combined ingenuity of a hundred generations

of inventors, the resourceful, intellectual, *social* man, that can make headway against the senseless, relentless, cruelly blind hostility of wind and wave.

Victor Hugo chose to incarnate this genius of the assembled race in his character *Gilliatt*, set him squarely to fight the sea, gave him only a bird-roost on the top of a desert rock, and called on the wrath of the unconditioned deep to do its worst.

*Toilers of the Sea* is by no means an allegory, yet its humble hero so adequately typifies the crafty, resourceful, practical intelligence of the longshore dweller, the agile, canny, adaptable being, representing the survivor in nature's process of selection continued through a thousand generations in the environment of the sea, that the reader can hardly escape the impulse to accord the story a generalized interpretation which makes it more than epic in its scope. How nobly and uncompromisingly the author sets the task for his humble fisherman genius! A small coasting steamer tightly jammed between the projecting horns of a partially submerged ocean cliff, where the force of tide and storm have hurled it, must be released, lowered, floated away from the dangerous neighborhood, and so redeemed. *Gilliatt* must accomplish the feat unaided, in the midst of a lonely and never visited sea. In a weather of storms and calms of alternate scorching heat and freezing cold, with no shelter other than that which he can create, no food other than that which he can win from his reluctant enemy, he must begin his work. The tools furnished him are precisely those of the primitive man—his hands. Against the power of sea and tide and gravitation he must oppose a hardy human frame and crafty human brain. Yet the contest is between nature inorganic and nature organic, refined, sensitized, intelligent, on which the unimaginable pains of countless ages of evolution have been expended.

The victory is with man. He fashions himself a shelter, searches out food, shapes his tools, calls the secret mechanic forces to his aid, wins over gravitation to his side. Sleepless, preternaturally vigilant, he defeats the cunning and the unchained wrath of the sea, even avoids the clutches of the terrible monster of the deep sea cave, sails calmly into the little harbor of his village home and quietly casts anchor there.

Such stories as this are clearly not private in their bearing, and as certainly not national. They are *racial*, and the reader's

joy in Gilliatt's splendid achievement is the joy of man over a clear triumph in a single one of the numberless battles with his age-old foe.

## RIVERS

There are certain ways in which the water element, as it appears not in unconditioned vastness of extent, but in the defined shape and restricted flow of inland streams, has impressed itself deeply upon the institutions of man, hence upon his race consciousness and traditions, and finally upon his literature. The fact that the river fills a large space in letters, as a theme of the poet and romancer, as a favored metaphor with the moralist and as a most potent agent of the descriptive artist, scarcely needs mention, much less illustration, at this point. But if it is possible, by inquiry into the nature of the part which the streams of water have played in the developing consciousness of mankind, to put ourselves in the way of accounting for the varied effects which the mention of rivers and brooks makes upon the present day reader of the poem and the story, such inquiry should not be without distinctive value.

After making full allowance for the potency of the individual experience, we must probably in the end go back to the story of the race, in our endeavor to explain those emotional reactions to the brook or to the flood which we are wont to characterize by the general and somewhat vaguely applied term, "instinctive."

Let us begin with that which will perhaps suggest itself as the most clearly defined and liveliest of the emotions with which we regard the broad sweep of the sliding and rushing river. That which we here term the feeling of *sublimity*, so far as it is of philogenetic origin, is probably the echo of an age-old *terror*, born in our ancestors at the moment when they beheld the river in its wrath.

At the risk of repeating a thought elsewhere expressed we may remark here that Fear, an emotion which has fallen into disrepute with the unthinking, has played a part of inestimable value in preserving the existence of our kind. Fear is the emotion which inhibits action in the presence of a new or unknown situation, affording the mind the indispensable instant in which to determine *what action is appropriate*. Men who

*feared* the waves or the fire, or the beasts, took means of escaping their power and learned to cope with it. These survived—and their attitude toward these phenomena survived in them and became a heritage of other generations. Says the psalmist, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and Psychology would give the idea here expressed the widest application, according it a hardly less comprehensive meaning than, Fear is Wisdom. The actually fearless man could be no other than an idiot. Nature has ways of ridding the race of the fools and the foolhardy.

The fascination which the conception of a river at flood has for the popular imagination has been impressed on the mind of the writer of this paper by a number of incidents, for the recounting of one of which he may be pardoned. It was his privilege once, on a perfectly dry, clear day, to stand with a party of campers on the bank of a dried up creek and watch the progress of a descending torrent of water, occasioned by sudden heavy showers far up stream. The water advanced like a horrid animal, nosing its way in and out the windings of a long deserted course, foul with the stench of offal washed from the sides of the upper channel, swallowing the fallen leaves, tumbling sticks and stumps about, carrying on its crest foam and refuse and the dead bodies of small animals. What such a sight, perhaps on a vastly grander scale, must have meant to the primitive man, ignorant in large measure of the causes of such phenomena, can scarcely be imagined.

Kipling strikes a deep and elemental note in his *In Flood Time*, wherein is recounted the experience of a man who was able to boast having survived the power of a swollen stream in which beasts and men alike perished. To quote briefly from the description:

When I left this bank there was a shoal a half mile down, and I made shift to fetch it and draw breath there ere going forward; for I felt the hands of the river heavy upon my heels. \* \* \* I made haste, the river aiding me, but ere I had touched the shoal, the pulse of the stream beat, as it were, within me and around, and, behold, the shoal was gone and I rode high on the crest of a wave that ran from bank to bank. Has the Sahib ever been cast into much water that fights and will not let a man

use his limbs? To me, my head upon the water, it seemed as though there were naught but water to the world's end, and the river drove me with its driftwood. A man is a very little thing in the belly of a flood. \* \* \* There were living things in the water, crying and howling grievously—beasts of the forests and cattle, and once the voice of a man asking for help. \* \* \* There were dead beasts in the driftwood on the piers, and others not yet drowned who strove to find a foot-hold on the lattice-work—buffaloes and kine, and wild pig, and deer one or two, and snakes and jackalls past all counting. Their bodies were black upon the left side of the bridge, but the smaller of them were forced through the lattice-work and whirled down-stream. \* \* \* I slid from the boom into deep water, and behind me came the wave of the wrath of the river. I heard its voice and the scream of the middle part of the bridge as it moved from the piers and sank, and I knew no more till I rose in the middle of the great flood. I put forth my hand to swim, and lo! it fell upon the knotted hair of the head of a man. \* \* \* He had been dead fully two days, for he rode high, wallowing, and was an aid to me. I laughed then \* \* \* and I twisted my fingers in the hair of the man, for I was far spent, and together we went down the stream—he the dead and I the living.

The preceding paragraphs of incident and quotation are intended to illustrate those dangerous phases of man's association with rivers which have tended to develop that sentiment of awe, that feeling of sublimity, with which we are wont to contemplate the rushing stream.

Men in all ages have attempted, and still attempt, both to eliminate the river as a barrier and to subdue it to the uses of industry and pleasure, and the stream has as continually opposed its blind power to the craft of man. Every village that is set upon a stream must pay its yearly toll of human lives—and once a decade must expect to see its mill-dams and its bridges washed away. Thus is the old terror kept alive, though in normal seasons and in normal persons sublimated and softened into the vague sense of power and grandeur with which

we respond to the poet's mention of wild cataracts and gushing torrents.

But we distinguish another and a gentler element in our feeling for brooks and rivers, and there is a kindlier sense in which literature refers to them. In this mode, the stream is part of a familiar and pleasant landscape, associated with homesteads and with friendly trees:

\*I saw again my lovely fatherland,  
The oaks that tower, broad and grand,  
The clear and purling stream;  
It was a dream.

In the story of the race, this feeling points back to the period of our earliest civilization, when men lived along the narrow valleys of the fertile water courses and were shut away from the threat of hostile tribes by towering, bleak and, to the civilization of that day, impassible mountains. With such protection only was community life and a developing society possible. Then the stream was indeed the friend and provider, the "mother" of man. Whole civilizations, as that of the Nile and Euphrates valleys were supported on the rich sediment deposited annually over wide extending lowland plains by the life bringing flood. The stream first, indeed, enriched the fields then watered them, and finally furnished the power to grind the grain which its charity had produced. The insistent fact of the life providing quality of the stream has made deep impress on our common thought and speech. One of the most appealing of the metaphors of Old Testament scripture is based on this universal sense and observation—

He shall be like a tree planted beside the rivers of water.

The ancient conception of the stream as one who labors in our behalf, the loyal servant, the life bringer, finds expression in as late a writer as Sidney Lanier:

\*\*But oh, not the hills of Habersham,  
And oh, not the valleys of Hall  
Avail: I am fain for to water the plain.

\* Translated from Heine: *Es War Ein Traum*.

\*\* Song of the Chattahoochee.

Downward the voices of Duty call—  
Downward, to toil and be mixed with the main,  
The dry fields burn, and the mills are to turn,  
And a myriad flowers mortally yearn,  
And the lordly main from beyond the plain  
Calls o'er the hills of Habersham,  
Calls through the valleys of Hall.

A further fact that enters into the account in the formation of the deep lying sentiment of streams is the way in which they have been indissolubly linked with the home-feeling. Few terrors, in childhood, exceed in poignancy the terror of being lost, an emotion which has played a large part in the preservation of the individual and the race. The rivers were the highways of the wilderness and at once offered to primitive man an avenue of adventure and a pathway of safe return. An animal or a man leaves no track in water, and a man pursued, or in doubt as to his whereabouts, let him once reach the river that flows by his dwelling, is already as good as safe at home. This feeling that the stream has an intensely *local* significance appears in narrative literature as a descriptive mode for the production of "local color" and in poetry in many an exquisite local lyric, such as *Bendemere's Stream* and 'Way Down upon the *Suwanee River*.

### MOUNTAINS.

Our present study has thus far led us to consider the profound emotional appeal of a number of the great elements of man's natural environment—the forests, the stars, the seasons, the rivers, the sea. And we have tried to show that the vague and, in popular phrase, the "instinctive" reactions which we experience in the presence of their phenomena or at the mention or description of them in literature is attributable to the age-long association of the race with these vast natural facts—an association fraught with the tremendous interests of life and death.

The list thus far studied is by no means a complete one. *The Mountains*, for instance, are present everywhere in literature with their impressive suggestions of vastness and sublimity, full of the the terror of loneliness and desolation, yet not with-



out a hint, at times, of shelter and retreat and friendly companionship, and they form the basis of the most majestic imagery of which language can boast.

A large part of the mountains must have played in the origin and continuance of early civilizations—bleak, barren and impassible, they were at once the destruction of the foolhardy, bent on plunder and pillage, and the protection of homes and tribes. It is doubtful whether the beginnings of civilization as we know it could have been realized but for the presence of these stern sentinels round about the ancient tribal home. Well might the instinct of home-making in the shadow of the great protector give rise to the sentiments of love and fear, merged finally into that noblest, most majestic of our emotions which we call the *sense of the sublime*. One need reflect but a moment to recall many examples of the literary use of mountain imagery in the suggestion of shelter and impregnable strength. Especially rich in these majestic images are the familiar Old Testament passages.

In the Lord I put my trust: How say ye to my soul,  
flee as a bird to your mountain.

O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me;  
let them bring unto thy holy hill.

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and  
truth by righteousness.

His foundation is in the holy mountains.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High  
shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the  
Lord is round about his people.

But the intended scope of the present work does not warrant my going further with the discussion of the emotional suggestion and the literary uses of nature phenomena. This part of the subject must be left with the remark, by way of recapitulation, that the inherited constitution of each member of our race predisposes him sooner or later to feel these appropriate emotions in the presence of the great primal stimuli of the universal en-

vironment. Once felt, the emotion can be resuggested by any word which by association stands for the thing itself—hence the *word* becomes the “Key of power,” the “spell of persuasion” in the hand of the literary artist, who thereafter can play upon our moods with a degree of certainty that the effect upon our spirits shall be precisely such as he intends.

### ANIMAL LIFE

We come now to a brief examination of a radically different element in that primitive environment in which man achieved the survival of his kind and his present marvelous physical and intellectual development.

Nothing in the environment of any species of animal life, if we except its immediate medium of earth or air or water, exerts a more absolute power in determining the question of its survival and the conditions of its continued existence than do the various forms of animal life by which it is surrounded. Is one animal the natural food of another? Then the first must escape the second or die. And conversely, the second must overtake the first or perish. In all ages Nature has “kept her balance true” by giving to every form of life its inveterate and implacable enemy—and the modern entomologist makes use of the most ancient provision of nature when he destroys the locust or the chintz bug by the propagation of an animal parasite.

The “lower animals,” then, upon which now the triumphant human individual of mature civilization has learned to look with contempt and something of indifference, but which the savage or the child still regards with intense feelings of favor or of terror, have been at more than one point in racial history a determining factor in the permanence of man’s existence. The necessity of an appropriate meeting and mastery of the animal environment, the devising of ways of escape from forest enemies, the means of overtaking and trapping food, the problems of the training and domestication of the beasts—all these primal life interests have contributed much to the sharpening of men’s wits and the formation of those fixed and “unlearned” instincts which form the basis of the rich and varied intelligence of the human creature. By *mind* alone could man in the ancient conditions of jungle life hope to achieve the superiority over the beasts that would insure his life and safety.

For he was excelled by one animal or another in every part of the physical equipment. The men who learned to escape and to conquer, and especially those who later made friends of the beasts, were those who survived the ages of savage or of partly civilized existence. For in time of cold the skins of these animals served men for protection; and in times of famine, their flesh, for purposes of food. Slowly, in these later days, we are learning to dispense with some of the services of our lowly friends—the steam engine, the electric car and lastly the automobile are supplanting the horse and the donkey, and the flocks and herds are, in a sense, a little more remotely associated with the common life than they once were. But the interest is still vital in a thousand ways and must so continue to the end.

The important use which these primal interests have served in literature is evident all along, from the mystical wood-creatures of old mythology, from the fiery steeds of the chariot of Achilles and the talking beasts of *Aesop* to Mr. Kipling's *Mowgli* and the delectable *Bre'r Fox* and *Bre'r Rabbit* of Uncle Remus. And that the animal theme is still to be regarded as a vital one, even in the literature of our generation is ably maintained by Prof. Harry Thurston Peck, who writes as follows: \*

That beasts with the attributes of human beings should figure in these tales involves, from the standpoint of primeval man, only a very slight divergence from probability. In nothing, perhaps, has civilization so changed us as in our mental attitude toward animals. It has fixed a great gulf between us and them—a gulf far greater than that which divided them from our ancestors. In the early ages of the world, when men lived by the chase, and gnawed the raw flesh of their prey, and slept in lairs amid the jungle, the purely animal virtues were the only ones they knew and exercised. They adored courage and strength, and swiftness and endurance. They respected keenness of scent and vision, and admired cunning. The possession of these qualities was the very condition of existence, and they valued them accordingly; but in each one of them they found their equals, and in fact their superiors, among the brutes. A lion was stronger than the strongest man. The hare was swifter. The eagle was more keen sighted.

\* *Introduction to Aesop's Fables, Warner's Library of the World's Best Literature.*

The fox was more cunning. Hence, so far from looking down upon the animals from the remotely superior height that a hundred centuries of civilization have erected for us, the primitive savage looked up to the beast, studied his ways, copied him and went to school to him. The man, then, was not in those days the lord of creation, and the beast was not his servant; but they were almost brothers in the subtle sympathy between them, like that which united Mowgli, the wolf-nursed *shi karri*, and his hairy brothers, in that most weirdly wonderful of all Mr. Kipling's inventions—the one that carries us back \* \* \* to the older India of unbroken jungle, darkling at noon-day through its green mist of tangled leaves, and haunted by memories of the world's long infancy when man and brute crouched close together on the earthly breast of the great mother.

The fact that the "animal literature" of our time is written chiefly for children and most appreciatively read by them is merely an evidence of the greater nearness of their sympathies to those objects which were the dominant interests of men in their early racial history, yet it is significant that questions regarding the habits of the dumb creatures of wood and stream have entertained the minds of Thoreau and John Burroughs, and that a wordy controversy over these matters has within a few months engaged the pens of a number of Americans of prominence, among them no less a person than the President of the United States. The hint may be dropped in conclusion that Ivan Turgenev, a master and promulgator of the methods of realism in the fiction of today, ultra modern in style and theme, treats the animal characters of his stories, the dogs and horses, with as much care in execution and as much vividness and completeness of detail, as he bestows on his most favored human subjects.

## PERSONALITY

Possibly the most insistent and the most baffling, the most obtrusive and the vaguest and most irreducible problem before the student of literary phenomena is that of the so-called "human interest." Let the author's style be never so rich and bril-

liant, let him lay hold upon the choicest hidden beauties of language and adorn his page with images of the most gorgeous or the most pathetic beauty; yet will the whole lack point and application and remain a dead impassive thing, until the *human figure* comes into relief—when the pulse of the reader leaps, the spell is woven, the interest is born.

The same fact is observable, of course, in life. Few persons can talk entertainingly of things or principles, and not many persons can listen well to speech that deals with these; but the man or woman of nature can never tire of talking and hearing about *people*.

If it be asked, Why does a man or a woman, or any fact concerning a human creature interest me more keenly than does the composition and conduct of the solar system? the ready answer is likely to be suggested—Because I myself am a man, a human creature. But this, after all, is only half an answer. I am a man, to be sure, but I am not *another man*, and it is the *man-not-myself*, after all, that interests me in life and in fiction, just as truly as the *man-myself*, or the *man like-myself*. The complete view will allow us to see *all other men* as constituting *the most vital part of each individual's environment*. We live now, and we have lived for countless generations, in an atmosphere in which the greatest element of care and uncertainty, of longing and terror and hope and despair was inherent in the thought of what *other people* were doing, or about to do.

Robinson Crusoe lived for months in the security of solitude among the myriad life of his ocean island—and at the first sight of a human foot print fled away into hiding, the victim of uncontrolled and nameless dread. And popular judgment has confirmed the psychology of this incident, as conceived by the author of the romantic story. One may well suppose the months of seclusion to have caused a reversion to those primitive instincts which a thousand generations of social living had served in part to obliterate.

From this thought it is but a step to the general principle to be enunciated as the central idea of this section of our present study, namely; that the strong and spontaneous interest we feel in every human character of life and literature is an outgrowth of the instinctive or intellectual activities of those countless years in which a knowledge of one's fellows was the most vital necessity, when a successful mode of meeting another man was an absolute condition of survival. Time was,

when, upon the meeting of two members of the human genus, especially of the same age and sex, an actual physical contest was imminent or inevitable. And the social contests of modern life, which form the basis of what we call in literature *story-interest*, stand in a direct line of evolution with these primitive combats. It is the purpose of this section of our study to show, first, that the elements of description, as applied to the persons and characters of the ideal heroes and heroines of romance, bring out precisely those features which, in the ancestral combats, made for victory; second, that more than a fanciful analogy exists between the motives and the actions of the primitive contests and those seen in the novel-plot of modern fiction and the drama.

As to the primal virtues which determined the outcome of ancient rivalries, they were as follows; strength of muscle to overpower an enemy; courage, to be the aggressor, first in the field; keenness of vision, to anticipate every motion of a rival or an escaping quarry; endurance, to follow the game all day, or to win the long drawn battle; cunning, to get by artifice what force is unable to obtain. There are entire literatures that mount no higher than this list of qualities in the making of a hero. The thousands of boy-stories are built about the idea of leadership, with a physical contest as the deciding factor. Given some sort of handicap, in size, or strangeness in community, or what not, the chosen hero is set to conquer the "bully of the gang." The upshot is a swimming match, a baseball game with the two contestants as rival pitchers, a foot-race, a field meet, or, much more often than anything else, a plain battle of fists. And, to make the similitude more complete, the smiles of a woman of tender years are to be numbered among the perquisites of victory. On the contrary, the dominant quality of the dime novel hero is *cunning*, and the detection and punishment of crime is devised as a field for the operation of this special gift.

When we come to consider literature of class, we find the same hero elements still present, though mingled up with the finer social graces of our more complex life. *Beowulf* was a slayer of monsters, and had the strength of thirty men in his hand-grip; *Jean Val Jean* escaped the police in the streets of Paris by scaling with his bare hands a sheer stone wall; Holland's *Jim Fenton* burst the door of his friend's cell from its hinges and carried the man away in his arms. It is quite the

fashion among magazine story writers of our time, early in a narrative to prepare for the hero a stern test of physical prowess, that his primacy on this level of elemental life may be from the outset unquestioned. Description makes much of the sturdy limbs, the deep chest, the strong neck, the brilliant and steady eye, the firm lips, the tone of mastery.

How much of this animal element enters into the hero making of really good literature is scarcely realized by the casual reader. The great characters of Shakespeare—Othello, Macbeth, Lear, Coriolanus—all are represented as having all the primitive virtues of size, vigor, voice, prowess. Hamlet alone, and he only half a hero, had not largeness of presence and bigness of bodily frame.

Blackmore's John Ridd,\* one of the most notable heroes of pure romance, was a veritable giant, the champion fighter and wrestler of his native Exmoor, a man of that sort of whom his country neighbors declare: "He doesn't know his own strength! It is worthy of note by the way, that while this story is wrought out along primitive lines—a true love-feud the prize of which was the person of a woman, with its climax the death of the loser in a battle of sheer animal strength, there is yet a profound and even epic significance in the outcome. Carver Doone, the outlaw, the unbending, unsocial enemy of community life is conquered and killed by the civilized, the social creature, Ridd. Their death-fight on the shore of the black swamp might well symbolize the passing of the old savage, individualistic order of life, the natural and inevitable triumph of social man, bringing with it the more lovely era of fellowship and interdependence, self-surrender and mutual aid.

A most interesting feature of narrative literature from the standpoint of Psychology is the description of person, as seen in special moods, or under the influence of strong excitement. Darwin in his *Expression of Emotion in Men and Animals*, laid down a broad basis for the interpretation of the origin of all bodily expression, showing that the countless unlearned and instinctive movements both of the voluntary and the involuntary muscles, of the face and limbs and interior members, are the outgrowth of primary self-preservative instincts. Thus the quickening of the respiration was a preparation for combat

\* See *Lorna Doone*.

or flight; the closing of the eyes in weeping prevents the gorging of the lining membranes with blood; the rounding of the infant's mouth before crying out is preparatory to the emission of the largest volume of sound in the call for help. The so-called James-Lange theory of emotion, defining it as merely the feeling of bodily change experienced in the presence of a stimulus to activity, hence *occasioned by*, rather than *occasioning* such activity, has lent further scientific interest to the study of these bodily and visible manifestations of inner feeling.

Very rich in literary touches are the paragraphs of modern descriptive artists which deal with the portrayal of mood. The quaking limb, the changing color, the compressed lip, the slackened jaw, the distended vein—all are noticed and used with telling effect.

\*Domsie clutched the letter and would have torn off the envelope. But he could not; his hand was shaking like an aspen. He could only look and I read.

The spirit of the conflict seemed to be alive in her. Her eyes were on fire; her cheeks had each a crimson spot, so exceedingly vivid, and marked with so definite an outline, that I at first doubted whether it were not artificial. \*\*

The Master sprang to his feet like like one transfigured; I had never seen the man look so beautiful. "A blow!" he cried. "I would not take a blow from God Almighty!" \*\*\*

In moments of strong excitement the primal traits of character come into evidence, and old instinctive movements and attitudes are made and assumed, as if the violent nervous excitation re-established old psychic connections, long since fallen into the obscurity of disuse. The observant novelist seizes upon these great moments in his subjects as furnishing the most illuminating hints regarding personality.

Lessing's black eyes dilated and his pupils seemed little points of fire \* \* \* Mellish noted that his ears

\* McLaren: *Beside the Bonny Briar Bush*.

\*\* Hawthorne: *Blythedale Romance*.

\*\*\* Stevenson: *Master of Ballantrae*.



were set forward unpleasantly, and that his upper lip was long and reminiscent of the animal. \*

I glanced 'round at the serried ranks of warriors behind us, and somehow, all in an instant, began to wonder if my face looked like theirs. There they stood, their heads craned forward over their shields, the hands twitching, the lips apart, the fierce features instinct with the hungry lust of battle and in the eyes a look like the glare of a blood-hound when he sights his quarry. \*\*

Thereupon he turned to the four men and passed his sword clean through each of them \* \* \* As he did so he kept humming and singing and whistling to himself \* \* \* and then he burst with a great voice into a Gaelic song. \*\*\*

And I that prated peace, when first I heard  
War-music, felt the blind wild-beast of force,  
Whose home is in the sinews of a man,  
Stir in me as to strike.

Last I spurr'd; I felt my veins  
Stretch with fierce heat.

Thereat the Lady stretch'd a vulture throat,  
And shot from crooked lips a haggard smile.

### PLOT

To come now to a discussion of the narrative or drama *plot*, which includes the related topics of *theme*, *action* and the *situation*, we may restate the principle set forth in an earlier page, that the idea of the *contest* is the enlivening element in practically all of the real stories of literature. On the combats of our primitive ancestors depended the question of actual physical survival; and the occasions of them were, broadly speaking, first, the obtaining of food, second, the perpetuation of species, including sex fights and those of the mother in the protection of her offspring. It will be seen at once that these themes are still the most potent ones in life and therefore in

\* Story in *Popular Magazine*.

\*\* Rider Haggard: *King Solomon's Mines*.

\*\*\* Stevenson: *Kidnaped*.

\*\*\*\* Tennyson: *The Princess*.

literature. Take out of the novel and the drama the love motive, including that of the family tie, and the struggle for existence—and the remainder would be scarcely worth considering.

But while insisting upon the existence of a common basis for the contests of primitive man and of modern society, we must hasten to acknowledge wide points of difference. It should at once be noted that a very large per cent of the struggles everywhere in progress in community life, and caught up into literature as the motive for story interest, are waged primarily not for the preservation of the actual physical existence, but for social advancement, wealth, station, recognition, power. Barely to live is comparatively, though perhaps not absolutely, an easy matter; the average man, if he were content with bare sustenance, scarcely need grapple with his fellow, or call into action "the wrestling thews that throw the world." But the instinct of preserving the individual life has in a measure undergone a metamorphosis and now exists as a strong and in many cases an uncontrollable desire to *exalt the ego*—to succeed, to be seen, to be known, respected or famous—at all points to triumph over one's fellow. Couple this instinct, to crave the exaltation of the ego, born of countless generations of struggle in which the successful ego was alone the survivor, with the related fact that the depression, discomfort or ruin of the opponent is necessary to the satisfaction of the victor, and you have in essence the theme and purpose of ninety-nine in every hundred stories and plays.

Childish or very primitive minds are satisfied with the very simplest situation that is capable of yielding satisfaction to one in the discomfort of another. Hence the comic Sunday supplement, with its story of few words and large colored pictures, setting forth the malicious and idiotic pranks of small boys and the catastrophe to the innocent old man. The serious novelist attains a more notable result, holding the reader in suspense from chapter to chapter and craving the satisfaction of a triumph in the person of the hero over his powerful adversary, yet consenting that the satisfaction may be long delayed, to the end that it may be the more complete and sweeter. Said Caesar: "Inasmuch as men suffer the more completely from a reversal of fortunes, the gods are accustomed to grant to those whom they wish to punish for their crimes a certain degree of

prosperity and long continued immunity." The glee which we may suppose Caesar's gods to have enjoyed in the downfall of the objects of their displeasure, the spectator of the play, the reader of the story experiences in the despair of *Shylock*, or the disgrace and ruin of *Uriah Heep*.

A further point of difference is evident between the combats of our savage ancestors and those of modern life and literature. Not only is the social battle of our time infrequently waged to the actual death of the defeated, but the battle ground is different, the weapons are different, and likewise the nature and the marks of victory.

By far the most important fact in the life of the civilized human creature of our day, and the one which most closely conditions his existence and his success, is our social organism. It has come to be a truism to say that the condition of success is service. Brute strength of frame gives place to power of intellect, physical endurance to moral fortitude, blind courage to clear, instructed wisdom. Feats of athletic prowess are out of place in the drawing room, where grace of deportment, self possession and ready wit are the only recognized weapons of conquest.

The liveliest situation in Mrs. Ward's novel, *Lady Rose's Daughter*, consists absolutely in a contest of manners. And Julie's victory over Lady Henry, won by the pronouncing of a few quiet sentences, is fully as evident and complete as if she had beaten her irate adversary into insensibility with a club. So of the great dramatic situations in literature—Othello before the rabble; Lauria in the presence of the plotting Florentines; Hermione in the court chamber with the hysterical Leontes, Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he passed out from among them "and no man dare lay hands upon him"—in every such case the decisive triumph goes to the side of modesty and self-restraint and inner moral power.

Yet a word in correction should be offered here in the interest of the most impartial view. Civilization does not involve a necessary lapse of qualities which made men great under barbarous conditions. Strength of spirit is not incompatible with but often is a correlate of strength of physical frame. The life and institutions of our age are by no means entirely social, not to say socialistic, but show an elaborate complex of social and individual elements. So the literature based on the inter-

play of personality takes cognizance of those elements which appeal not only to the primitive and the cultured mind *as such*, but those which address the dual nature in every one of us—the barbaric and the civilized, the individual and the social, in us all. Your novel or your drama of power must be wrought out upon the plane of social living and be keyed to the pitch of moral truth—yet it is rightly privileged to make use of the vast treasure of artistic potencies inherent in the physical constitution and the natural history of man.

### THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT IN WORDS

There is a certain fascination in the phenomena of human speech which thoughtful minds of many ages and diverse civilizations have felt. Approached from any side the subject is capable of yielding inexhaustible interest. The lexicographer and the grammarian find limitless scope for the exercise of the analytic powers in the classification of forms and differentiations of meaning and relationship. The essayist finds himself led out from the examination of synonyms, antonyms and correlates into the weighing and considering of the most abstruse problems of general truth, which the language terms have power to suggest. The etymologist derives from his research most interesting and valuable lessons regarding the conduct of human society and racial customs. The philologist has during the century past astounded the world with his revelations of previously unexplored phenomena, and makes real, in his science of linguistic analogies and cross-relationship, the common parentage and near kinship of widely separated peoples; touching History and Philosophy on the one hand, and Psychology and human Physiology on the other, the new science of Philology serves as a bridge between the speculative and abstract and the most vitally concrete.

As for pure Psychology, it finds in language not only a number of its profoundest problems but as well the application and illustration of many of its most clearly defined principles. For instance, nothing better illustrates the inter-play of the various psychic functions and the so-called "reflex arc concept" of response to stimuli, and motor activity than does one's habitual reaction to the spoken or printed word. Some years of childhood are consumed in the establishment of the nerve connections necessary to correlate the auditory perception of a word with the

proper motor activities of throat and tongue and lips, which result in pronunciation. Still other years are necessary to establish similar connections for the visual perception of the printed symbol.

But Psychology is interested in words not only in respect to the interesting light their use sheds on our present thought processes and reactions, but also, and perhaps more especially just now, for the part speech has played in racial development and the index it furnishes of the growing mastery of man over his environment. And it is with this more general, this racial or genetic phase of the language problem that we are more especially concerned just here.

But before touching on the general theme of the origin of language, it is proposed to devote two paragraphs to the mention of a like number of truths that may be found interesting in this connection. First, speech is an instinct. Not a perfect instinct, as the suckling of infants or the chick's response to the danger cry of the mother hen; nor does it assert itself so early in life as do some others, but it is none the less a true instinct, for all that. This means nothing more than that a *tendency* to establish brain connections between sounds perceived through the ear and the muscular activity of tongue and lip and throat necessary to the imitation of such sounds is part of the universal heritage of children, and present in them at birth, though not actively asserting itself till some months later. This fact is one of profound significance, if for no other reason than that it argues the unimaginable antiquity of human vocal utterance.

A second fact of interest is the absence of a clearly defined speech organ. No such intricate mechanism as the eye or the ear has been evolved for the speaking function. Just how much the human throat has suffered modification to adapt it to the function of utterance is a subject for the physiologist, but it is evident that in the main our speech is produced by the secondary activity of members whose primary functions are respiration and the prehension and deglutition of food. From this we draw a lesson of the marvelous adaptation of man to the limitations of his own frame and of the infinite resourcefulness of nature.

Regarding the origin of speech, infinite speculation is possible, while, from the nature of the case, definite and detailed knowledge is an impossibility. One general principle, however,

can with safety and propriety be laid down. The power to formulate the vague and accidental sounds of primitive babbling into definite, concise, correlated sound-groups, expressive of will, intention, desire and question, was won in slow process of evolution, and came, as man's other powers came, from the exercise of intelligence sharpened by the pressure of necessity, re-enforced by the determining element of natural selection.

Says Max Muller: \* Language breaks out in action. Some of the simplest acts, such as striking, rubbing, pushing, throwing, cutting, joining, measuring, ploughing, weaving, etc., were accompanied then, as they frequently are even now, by certain involuntary sounds, at first very vague and varying, but gradually becoming more and more definite. \* \* \* We thus learn to understand how the whole world which surrounded the primitive man was assimilated or digested by him, he discovering everywhere acts similar to his own acts, and transferring the sounds which originally accompanied his acts to these surrounding agents.

To interpret the phenomenon a little more fully, a man performing a particular sort of labor, like the hewing of timber, the scraping of a skin or the hauling of a rope, found himself emitting certain noises, such as a groan or the sudden intake or outgo of the breath. Particularly was this noticeable in the concerted labor of a number of men, where the uttered syllable, by its rymthmical repetition became the rallying sign for each succeeding effort, like the "*He-yo-he*" of sailors. Finally the sound made by the laborer, or that emitted by the instrument of labor, from being the *most interesting* and *significant feature* of the object concerned, came to represent the *object itself* as a definite and intelligible symbol.

This introduces us to the vital point of the present section of our discussion. The element of emotional interest determines not only which of its various characteristics shall give a name to a particular object but it determines which objects and experiences shall be felt as vital, the names of which shall become potent as agents of expression in conversation and in letters.

Says Emerson, "One moment of life differeth from another

\*Sartor Resartus: *Origin of Religion*.

moment in power and authority." Very true. And the truth may be extended to cover a multitude of relations. In every life there are a few great events in experience and observation that transcend all others in emotional interest—and the *names* of these moments and events are the big words in every language, because they are forever charged with the shock of attention with which they were at first struck out. *Light, cold, dawn, fight, starve, gasp, stab, thirst, rain, lost*—these are the life and death words of all time and each carries a burden of feeling proportionate to the intimacy with which the suggested events are associated with survival. These words which name the experiences of great emotional significance become the appealing metaphors of literature. When Tennyson's hero says "And secret laughter *tickled* all my soul," the figure strikes home to the consciousness of every reader, for there is in the hysterical experience which we name *tickle*, a subconscious memory of the vast reaches of time during our forest life when a sudden and violent muscular response to the barely perceptible sensation of contact with insect enemies was an absolute condition of the preservation from death by poison.

Analysis of the so-called "immortal phrase," about which we hear a good deal in current criticism, will reveal the presence in these phrases of the immortal words of life and death significance. One such may be quoted from a most familiar passage of New Testament scripture:

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

And he said unto them, *This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.*

The unerring literary instinct of the poet Jesus seized upon the infinitely suggestive metaphor of the *shed blood*, and the result of his selection was the institution of the Sacrament and the doctrine of the Atonement which, after two thousand years are still centers of Christian observance and belief. Moreover, *the cup*, associated as was the idea of it with the vital experiences of thirst and refreshment and the social customs of the family repast and the banquet hall, became a fitting subject of legendary story, so that in its mystical character of the Holy Grail it appears in a large cycle of mediaeval tales, the purport

of which has been conveyed to the modern world in Wagner's dramatic opera, *Parsifal*, and in one of the most beautiful of Tennyson's *Idyls of a King*.

But not only is it true that a life has its important moments and events, but particular situations and objects have their vital features which are the centers of emotional interest. A cardinal principle of art, in painting and in descriptive literature, is that one feature or at most a few features of a face or a landscape will be felt as significant, while all else is seen vaguely if at all; so in every experience there is a similar proportion of the important and the non-significant. Thus the vital moment of the day is dawn—for the dawn has in a thousand instances of our ancestral life been the moment of deliverance, or discovery, or release or execution. The important feature of the sea is the shore, the point of safety or destruction, the beginning and the end of all the sea going enterprises of ten thousand years. The vital point of the boat is the *helm* or the *chart*, and the vital man is the *pilot*, or possibly the commander of the vessel. Poetry cares nothing about the non-essentials, in material or in people, can in fact make no use of them for its purposes of emotional appeal, but exclaims:

I hope to meet *my Pilot* face to face.

OR

*Captain, my Captain*, our fearful trip is done.

OR

Lost, our *helm*, our boat must founder  
Midst the mad and moaning gale.

For purposes of rapid illustration let the following be called to mind. A vital feature of the human frame is the throat, hence one of our strongest metaphors, to *throttle* legislation. The life-giving connection of the street car is the *trolley*, hence the popular interest, and the slang metaphor "off his trolley," as a figure of insanity. The life-and-death-feature of the wagon is the *brake*; of the tree, the *root*; of the house the *foundation*; of the door, the *bolt*; of the river, the *current*; of the body, the *breath*, of the autumn, the *fruit*.

Thus our words have come to us, laden with the joys and



the terrors, the satisfaction and the revulsions of the common experience of the race. And the literary artist, feeling as we feel, all the power in these symbols for stimulus to emotional reaction, and the peculiar and distinctive quality of each, plays upon them like the keys of an instrument and our response to his music is as inevitable as to the varied vibrations of the violin.

The secret of a powerful style lies in the use of words which stand for the vital part of any common object or experience and which have therefore come to us encased in that emotional atmosphere in which they were conceived.

But to return for just a moment to the subject of the experience of primitive man with phenomena of speech. Not only were the first word inventions rewarded by notable satisfactions, in the saving of labor and the hastening of results; but the master of the word must have felt at once the multiplication of his power over his fellows. What is true now was true then, and in a most vital sense—that *the word is the projection of the self*. To say to one *Come*, and he cometh; *Do this*, and he doeth it. This is the height of power, the evidence and final test and the very soul and body of mastery.

The miracle of the Word was ever so vast that man could not credit himself as having been its author; so John thinks it not profane to say, "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was God." The profound awe and even terror with which simple minds have regarded the word mystery is evidenced in the disposition of savages, testified to by Hartland,\* to conceal from their fellows their *real names*, believing that the knowledge would afford their enemies a certain mystical advantage over them. Church men of the middle ages seriously preached the doctrine that the Immaculate conception came about by way of Mary's receiving through her ear the Word of the Holy Spirit.

The primitive sense of the preternatural power of words is very generally represented in the *incantation*, characteristic of all pagan religious forms and echoed more than once in Old and New Testament chronicles.

"They brought him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word."

Survivals of this deep rooted respect for the magical power

\* The Natural History of Fairy Tales.

of the word, and the attendant desire to make use of its secret potency may still be traced in the "King's Ex." of children's games, in love charms, in the countersign of military usage, in the custom of opening the Bible at random to find a passage suitable to a crisis in life, in the use of the sacred Book in courts of law and in the ascription to the sacred name which customarily concludes the Christian's prayer.

### THE THEMES OF LITERATURE

If it be true that the great aim and purpose of all living organisms, men as well as brutes and plants, is *to live*; and if it be true, as it must be, that the literature of men reflects the primal interests of his species—then whatever appears persistently as a theme of literary construction in the monuments of all peoples and civilizations must be a something intimately associated with the survival of the race. It is not a difficult matter to name certain of these universal phenomena which serve as the animating principle of song and story, the theme, the *motif*, as one may be pleased to call it. Love, Mystery, Battle, Death are among the themes appearing most widely in the literature of all nations, and these must be regarded as paramount in literary power because most intimately associated with the primary end of all conscious and unconscious life.

In this section of my work, devoted to the general analysis of Theme, I intend to elaborate only one of the many possible subjects which offer themselves. It is my purpose to consider somewhat in detail the problem of Death as a factor in human selection and survival, with citations to the literature of the world which show the various attempts to meet the conditions imposed upon man by his knowledge and observation of the phenomenon of death. But before proceeding to the presentation of this part of the discussion, it seems worth while to allow space for a hasty glance at a certain other of the great *motifs* of literature.

### LOVE

Of all the life phenomena which serve as the kindling agents of story interest and the inspiration of poetic thought and expression, by far the most powerful in effect and widely

diverse in appearance is the principle of Love. Indeed it is precisely because the theme is so diffuse in its presence in literature as to defy adequate representation, and because the vital connection of the principle with species survival is so evident as scarcely to require mention, that I have not selected it as the one subject to be carefully examined. Yet the importance of the love-*motif* as a literary phenomenon will not suffer it to be ignored. We may compromise matters by offering a few observations to serve as mere outline for a possible and needed study of the matter in detail.

Love is conceived, at least by present-day writers, as the one unfailing source and substance of story interest. Nine-tenths of the "daily short stories" of your newspaper are built up about the simple, undifferentiated element of sex. The merest thread of plot, the most meager details of atmosphere and incident are necessary. The desire of man for woman or woman for man, a few moments of wooing, with a conclusion of felicity or of renunciation are sufficient to hold the normal reader's interest.

If one should ask, Why is this true? Why will men and women who have serious interests in life, real duties and ambitions which have no part with the romantic speeches and extravagant performances of boys and girls, why will these people forget the demands of real living and allow their proper duties to wait while they pursue the dream fortunes of these shadow-creatures of the story-teller's fancy, the answer is, that in so doing they are obeying a law of their own natures far older than any duties and ambitions of the present hour.

If there is any end more ultimate than the reproduction of species, nature fails to reveal such, or philosophy to demonstrate its existence. At all hazards nature had to develop in animals the passion of sex. When a lover says to his mistress, "I would die for you," he but states the most self-evident of nature's platitudes, for the race of animals is long since extinct in which the love of male for female or of mother for offspring was not put above the fear of death or the desire of anything whatsoever.

The end of the tree is attained with the ripening of the nut, the completed, impervious encasement of the germ of the tree of future years; and the story is complete when the family is established and the normal succession of life-forms is made

secure. Then, if the pollenizing of the plant is the great moment in corn-culture; and if nature expends her most lavish care in the furtherance of the mating of her noblest and strongest males with her noblest and strongest females, among birds and fishes, why should *not* the business of the world wait upon the success of the hero in his wooing of the heroine? Nothing can be plainer than this—that we are interested in “love-stories” because, by process of selection any race of creatures *not* interested in reproduction above all other possible subjects could not exist in the world beyond a generation.

A teacher of voice culture, on listening to a somewhat familiar complaint, that his pupils sang nothing but love songs on the occasions of their public recitals, made the naive reply, “Why! Is there anything *else* to sing about?” There is much of truth in the implied suggestion. For not only is love the most universal and in a sense the most powerful of human motives, but primitive song, as seen typically in the notes of birds, is bound up in the most intimate fashion with the sex life of individuals. The thought of this paragraph is no more than a hint, and is not meant to introduce a discussion of the song principle in poetry, a subject into which, though fascinating in the extreme, these present studies can not enter. This casual reference is justified only by the requirement of symmetry in the general treatment of the matter at issue.

Before leaving this topic, discussion of which has already run to greater lengths than were intended, I can not forbear further mention of the importance which sex attraction has as a present factor in literature and in life. Every savage instinct, when the race advances from the plane of primitive to that of social living, must conform by readjustment to the conditions of a new environment. Just as truly as the morphological features of the snail must change when he leaves the water and goes to live on higher and drier land, so the manners of men must change when they pass from an environment of unexplored forest and wide spreading prairie to that of city walls and tenements and the rights of neighbors. And just so truly as snails must die in the change—whole races of snails, whose variation does not fit them to live in the changed conditions, so the races of men must perish who cannot be broken to the new environment of civil society. To master this terrible power of sex—to direct it into useful channels and restrain it

to the uses of life and not of death, this is possibly the most intimate and insistent of the problems of civilization. Sex control is even now a selective factor of extreme importance in the complex life of the present, a problem for physicians and city councils and journalists and novelists and the individual man. Hence all the legal aspects of sex association—free love, divorce, intrigue, together with the felicities and tyrannies of the marital relationship—all become vital themes of discussion and absorbed interest—and Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina* and Ibsen's *Doll's House* and *The Master Builder* rise from the plane of the individual to that of the social and universal.

A word further. There will be no getting away from the love element in fiction. The themes which our self conscious age calls great and important will continue to be mingled up by the wise artist with a portion of this primal and life giving element. The love plot is going to be, as it has been, the medium of thought, the test and expression of character, the soul of the true "story-interest"—because in the presence of this primal force we realize most keenly the fact of our essential humanity and the presence of the universal principle of life.

If in the above paragraphs I have seemed to slight those phases of love which we call by the general names of the parental, the filial and the family affections, it is because consideration of these subjects must lie along the lines laid down in the discussion of the generic principle, the application of which to these special manifestations is easily deducible from the general purport of the section.

Mother care, as illustrated by the hen for her chicks, is by inherited and instinctive ties of family affection, have had instincts; and its development through process of selection is most easily conceivable. It is self evident that the offspring of mothers who exercise no childward care are seldom able to reach maturity and so to perpetuate through any posterity of theirs the unfortunate tendency toward neglect of the young. Nature conserves the "mother instinct" as an essential condition of continued racial existence.

Likewise, people living in family groups, bound together by inherited and instinctive ties of family affection have had certain advantages in the struggle for existence over the solitary and the nomadic individuals. Hence the family as a social institution has helped men to meet the ever more restricted conditions of civilized living, and has become a permanent char-

acteristic of racial habit. *Home* and *brother* and *mother* and *father* come therefore to be great words in every language, and the affinity of kinship a most potent and exalted literary theme..

### DEATH

The idea of death as a psychic element, distinct from the instinct of self preservation, is of comparatively late origin, and its inception belongs to the period of man's conscious and reflective thinking.

One may indeed now declare, and find many to agree with him, that the great and pressing problem of mankind is how to reconcile present living with the certain knowledge of approaching death.

But such was not always the case. The insistent question "Is life worth living since we must die?" is never asked by our lowly brothers of the field and stream. A million generations of birds and beasts have found life worth living with no thought that it could be otherwise. And man himself, in that unimaginable lapse of time consumed in his *unconscious* existence, so to speak, never found life other than worth while. The difference is easy to name. The live dog trots carelessly by, or leaps indifferently over, the body of his dead companion, for the power of reflection, and the higher imagination are not his. But the man, conscious, keen, full of visions, accustomed to reason by cause and effect, shrewd to detect analogy in events and situations, sees in his prone comrade the picture of his own fate, the loss of all experience of sense and knowledge and the sweet consuetudes of joy and pain. The poetry of civilized, refined, cultured, reflective man is full of the pathos and the hopeless horror of it:

\*And the high gods took in hand  
 Fire, and the falling of tears,  
 And a measure of sliding sand  
 From under the feet of the years;  
 And froth and drift of the sea;  
 And dust of the laboring earth;  
 And bodies of things to be  
 In the houses of death and of birth;

\* Algernon Charles Swinburne: Chorus from *Atalanta in Calydon*.

And wrought with weeping and laughter,  
 And fashioned with loathing and love,  
 With life before and after  
 And death before and above,  
 For a night and a day and a morrow.  
 That his strength might endure for a span,  
 With travail and heavy sorrow  
 The holy spirit of man.

\* \* \* \* \*

His speech is a burning fire  
 With his lips he travaileth;  
 In his heart is a blind desire.  
*In his eyes foreknowledge of death;*

\* \* \* \* \*

He weaves and is clothed with derision.  
 Sows and he shall not reap;  
 His life is a watch or a vision  
 Between a sleep and a sleep.

\*The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
 Awaits alike the inevitable hour.  
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

\*\*If sleeping wake. If feasting rise,  
 Before I turn away. It is the hour of fate;  
 And they who follow me reach every state  
 Mortals desire, and conquer *every foe*  
*Save Death.*

The literature of the world furnishes the material for an inexhaustible study of the ways in which mankind has sought to meet this new element of his environment, an element that possesses merely a basis of reality in the objective world, but has its real existence in his own developed and enlightened consciousness. Numerous are the thoughts and sentiments which man has set up to be a protection against the disintegrating realization of approaching doom. Whole systems of thought, each with its exponent of a complete literature are concerned with this idea. It will be possible here to enumerate a few of

\* Grav's *Elegy*.

\*\* John J. Ingalls: *Opportunity*.

the views with which man has fortified his spirit against the image of annihilation that has threatened him.

The most widely entertained of those views and, thus far at least, the most successful, is the simple denial of the reality of death. Any conception of fate which asserts the continuation of consciousness beyond the cessation of the bodily activities and functions is not only in line with men's desires, but is, in a way, in line with their necessities, for it removes, or at least reduces to a minimum, the psychic fact which most directly threatens the survival of the race. Religions are founded on this conception, and religious literatures gather around it. It is scarcely necessary here to quote the texts of Hebrew and Christian scripture which develop the doctrine of immortality. One needs only to remember the tremendous impetus which Christianity gained from the belief in the story of the resurrection and to reflect on how insistent the thought of death and the hereafter is in the doctrine and observance of every Christian church to realize that just here is the vital point in religion, the element that in all times gives the priesthood its power and the sacred writings their authority.

Hymnology sounds a triumphant note of faith in the hereafter and taunt of death.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless.  
 Ills have no weight and fears no bitterness.  
 Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
 I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Up from the grave he arose  
 With a mighty triumph o'er his foes,  
 He arose a victor from the dark domain,  
 And he lives forever with his saints to reign.  
 He arose! He arose! Hallelujah, Christ arose!

And the lyric poetry of secular writers is often no less positive in its assumption of future existence, in some mystical state of conscious life:

\*No, indeed! for God above

Is great to grant, as mighty to make,

\* Browning: *Evelyn Hope*.



And creates the love to reward the love:

I claim you still, for my own love's sake!

Delayed it may be far more lives yet,

Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:

Much is to learn, much to forget

Ere the time be come for taking you.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!

My heart seemed full as it could hold;

There was place and to spare for the frank young smile

And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.

So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:

See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!

There, that is our secret: go to sleep!

You will wake, and remember, and understand.

A second mode of belittling the idea of death is to exalt the principle of loyalty to a country or to a cause. Greek mothers bred contempt of death in their sons by teaching that the life of the state was ever to be chosen before that of the individual. The Japanese of our day prefer honor to life, and death to disgrace, successful service of the Mikado being in each case the standard of conduct. The literature of this thought is possibly not large in volume, but is of the greatest potency. How many a man has been nerved for the performance of a dangerous duty by Tennyson's familiar lines:

Theirs not to make reply;

Theirs not to reason why;

Theirs but to do and die.

Into the jaws of death,

Into the mouth of hell,

Rode the six hundred!

The poetic literature of our country boasts a few lyric gems in which the ecstasy of self renunciation finds beautiful expression. Most notable, perhaps, is Joseph Rodman Drake's *American Flag*, certain lines of which picture the supreme happiness of a hero's death amid the wild grandeur and awful terror of a battle at sea:

Flag of the seas! on ocean wave

Thy stars shall glitter o'er the brave;

When death, careering on the gale,  
 Sweeps darkly round the bellied sail,  
 And frightened waves rush wildly back  
 Before the broadside's reeling rack,  
 Each dying wanderer of the sea  
 Shall look at once to heaven and thee,  
 And smile to see thy splendors fly  
 In triumph o'er his closing eye.

It should be remarked in passing that much of the patriotic oratory of the world, while intended directly to influence the minds of men toward the courageous service of the state, has in fact contributed largely to the minimizing of the fear of death by the exaltation of ideals of public duty.

A third view of the anticipated experience of dying regards it in the nature of release from pain. Akin to the Buddhistic conception of Nirvana, this thought finds expression nevertheless in a large number of Christian hymns. *There is Rest for the Weary; Beyond the Smiling and the Weeping; Asleep in Jesus.*

Possibly in the work of no other English poet, is the morbid craving of death as a refuge, as an escape from "the fever called living" so insistently present as it was in that of the gifted and rare but always melancholy Christina Rossetti. In her very first poem of note, *Passing Away*, this characteristic attitude was clearly defined, and her *Up-Hill* and the sonnet *Rest* give voice to precisely the same somber sentiment.

### REST

O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;  
 Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;  
 Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth  
 With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.  
 She hath no questions, she hath no replies,  
 Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth  
 Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;  
 With stillness that is almost Paradise.  
 Darkness more clear than noon-day holdeth her,  
 Silence more musical than any song;  
 Even her very heart has ceased to stir;  
 Until the morning of eternity

Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;  
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

To be clearly distinguished from this morbid and scarcely helpful view, is that represented in Walt Whitman's *Ode to Death*, wherein the phenomenon is not a subject of dread, but a something to be craved as a part of the lawful experience of life, one by no means to be missed, as the final climax and satisfaction of existence.

Still other than this ultra modern conception is that of strong-souled philosophers of all times, who have regarded death as a something to be met with the fortitude which becomes a man. Out of one's own ideals of courage and high privilege he is to realize the strength which will rob the mysterious foe of his unrightful terrors. Scarcely can one conceive more noble or more heartening lines than Tennyson's:

And may there be no moaning of the bar  
When I put out to sea!

and the cheerful *Requiem* of Robert Louis Stevenson:

Under the wide and starry sky  
Dig my grave and let me lie:  
Glad did I live, and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with will.  
This be the verse you grave for me—  
Here he lies where he longed to be,  
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter, home from the hill.

But in some respects the greatest single contribution of any poet of the English tongue to the need of men who must learn how to die is Bryant's *Thanatopsis*. One is saved from the power of his own cowardly instincts by the scornful picture of the "galley-slave, scourged to his dungeon" and resolves to meet the issue, when at last he must, in the high indifference of him who

Wraps the drapery of his couch about him  
And lies down to pleasant dreams.

## OTHER THEMES

The remainder of this section can contain nothing more than the briefest enumeration of some of the elements of Race Psychology that have entered into the making of literature.

## BATTLE

Battle has been discussed somewhat fully in an earlier section.\* Fighting, for life, for advantage, for the "exaltation of the ego" regarded by men of all races, savage and civilized ancient and modern, as the most vivid moment of existence, asserts itself from the beginnings of the literature of many tongues as the most favored of themes. Achilles and Sigfried and Beowulf and Lancelot are paralleled in later story by Hereward and Ivanhoe and John Ridd and Allan Breck. In its original frankly undisguised character or in the softened and sublimated form of the modern social struggle, the primal instinct of combat reappears as the chief exciting force in a vast number of the narrative and dramatic productions of every language.

## MYSTERY

Awe, which makes the step to proceed slowly and softly in the presence of the unknown, and Curiosity, which insist on a knowledge of what is hidden, are instincts of great preservative value in animal life. They appear in literature as the mystery element, clinging about the Greek and Roman and Hebrew classics as an atmosphere of dread of the secret forces of malicious deity; coloring the mediaeval hero tales with hints of dragon hoards, mysterious dwarfs, and fabulous "night-striders of the misty moors." The same element renders Nick Carter popular with novel reading youth and creates Sherlock Holmes a hero of a literature of somewhat greater pretensions.

## TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE

The motor powers are at the basis of all living, and the "streaming" or "flowing" of the protoplasmic cell marks the beginning of migration. The ability to change position, to

\* See *Personality*, Page 50.

get from one place to another and to live under the new conditions found is the ultimate test of ability to survive. It is no wonder that an instinct so strong as this, which we discover in the flight of birds and the migration of beasts, in the wanderings of Israel, in the march of Atila and his Huns, in the Crusades of Mediaeval Europe, in the pioneering of the western world, in the rush to California in '49, and the pilgrimage of the hosts of Mormon, in the restlessness of modern life and the *Wanderlust* of a million "tramps"—it is no wonder that this instinct for movement, change, adventure, finds abundant representation in literature, all the way from Ulysses and Aeneas to Huckleberry Finn. The essential, primal nature, of the interest involved is evident from the fact that the migration or adventure element appears not only in a single department of literature but is present in stories of the gravest import as prominently as in those the most inconsequential. This principle links *Exodus* with *Treasure Island*, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* with *Jack Hazard and His Fortunes*, the story of Jacob's wanderings and the delicate sentiment of *Lead Kindly Light* with *Westward Ho!* and *Marching Through Georgia*.

### PRESENT DAY THEMES

The world is just now passing through a period of readjustment. Men learned, long ago, how to live in places partially remote from their fellows; now they are trying to learn to live together. The survival and continued progress of the race depends on a successful meeting of new conditions. Problems of commerce, of subduing the earth, of the mastery of nature's forces, problems of social adjustment, of disease and sanitation—these are the issues which men in our generation are trying to meet, and must meet, and are bound to meet, in the spirit of conquerors. The literature of the day naturally reflects the day's activities. Stories of business life, practically unknown a generation ago, now have first place in the pages of the current magazines. One tale concerns the building of a railroad; another, the erection of a light house or a bridge; one records the test of a turbine engine or of an automobile; still another, a fight with tuberculosis and a triumph of modern methods of sanitary treatment. In all these, the old themes of love and rivalry and mystery and adventure are wont to re-

appear, but in an environment of peculiarly modern conditions. In short, whatever is vital at any age in the development of man is bound to appear in the literature which records the impressions and interests of the time. Even the conscious study of human Psychology and of the genetic origins of our mental life has so impressed the mind of our generation that a very considerable body of our literature is concerned with the new thought, as witness *The Reign of Law*, by James Lane Allen, *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair, *The Call of the Wild*, by Jack London and even many of the humorous sketches of Eugene Wood.

### CONCLUSION

The possibilities of the sort of studies suggested in the present dissertation stretch away endlessly before the mind of the writer. I have written now more voluminously than I intended, yet there are many fields left to explore and of the most alluring character. For instance, the vastly important subject of *Rhythm*, its basis in human physiology and the laws of nervous activity, together with the social uses of song and rhythmic utterance, and the illustration of all by the primitive and the developed literature of mankind. Then, in the discussion of the elements of man's natural environment, such tremendous agents as the Clouds and the Winds were but barely and casually mentioned. And such widely suggestive themes as Migration and the Pioneering spirit have here been accorded a single paragraph, when a volume would no more than do them justice. A long list of subjects for this sort of investigation, each promising valuable results, could be offered upon the briefest reflection, as, for example, man's normal reactions toward the phenomena of Age and Birth and Crime and Miracle and the social institutions of Marriage and the Home and Law.

After all, if the pages here submitted for examination are to be regarded as possessed of value, that value will consist not in the extension but in the direction of the studies undertaken. The writer therefore drops the labor, for the present, at this point, with the expressed hope that the future may see more of the study of literary elements from the standpoint of Genetic Psychology than has as yet been done, and that the present work may be not without its influence in directing thought and research into these, to the writer, most inviting fields.

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The figure consists of two parts. The top part shows a single hexagon with vertices labeled  $a$  through  $f$ . The bottom part shows a larger section of the lattice with vertices labeled  $a$  through  $z$ , illustrating the connectivity between adjacent hexagons.





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